

Ecological Appraisal and Impact Assessment at
Sheepfold Farm,
Bronington, Whitchurch,
Wrexham SY13 3HD
Grid Ref. SJ 4946 3938

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1. Summary

The purpose of the report is to assess the potential ecological impacts of a proposed development at Sheepfold Farm, Whitchurch, Wrexham and advise on any mitigation measures to comply with local planning policy and government legislation.

The proposed scheme entails the installation of four shepherd's huts near a barn in a field used for grazing and outdoor leisure activities.

The site and adjacent land were examined to establish the presence of or evidence of use by protected species of animals.

Impacts during the development should be low provided that no bird nests are constructed or occupied while work is taking place. If birds are building nests or any are occupied at any stage of the development, work in that area must stop until the young have left the nest.

There is not considered to be any threat to individual bats or their conservation status, however the site may be used by foraging and commuting bats, therefore a lighting plan should be designed in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust guidelines.

A Method Statement should be followed with regard to great crested newts as given on page 16.

It is recommended that some planting of trees take place as enhancement.

There should not be any significant impact on any protected species or habitat as long as the recommended mitigation and compensation measures are followed.

2. Introduction

Susan Worsfold BSc (Hons) ACIEEM is an experienced wildlife surveyor, licensed bat worker and voluntary bat roost visitor. Registration number CLS0895 2015-12555-CLS-CLS (CL15 Bat Roost Visitor Level 1) and registration number CLS 0895 2015-12556-CLS-CLS (CL18 Bat Survey Level 2) (Natural England) and S086005/1 (Natural Resources Wales);

Licensed great crested newt worker, registration number 2016-19947-CLS-CLS (NE) and S086057/1 (NRW)

This report was commissioned by Rob Middleton of Farm Adventure.

The site, at Sheepfold Farm (formerly Cae Bach), Bronington, Whitchurch, was assessed on the 8th December 2015 and the results are given in the report Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of Land at Cae Bach, Bronington Whitchurch (*Worsfold and Bowen 2015*).

The proposed scheme involves installation of four shepherd's huts at the south east end of the barn.

The purpose of the report is to identify and address any significant ecological effects which are likely to occur as a result of the proposed development. This is necessary to comply with local planning policy and government legislation and avoid any offence being committed. Also, to describe any compensation, mitigation and enhancement measures which should be taken.

3. Methodology

3.1. Scope of the Assessment

The report incorporates an phase 1 extended habitat survey, searching for use or potential use by any rare, threatened, endemic and non-native invasive species which might be associated with such a site in accordance with:

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and listed in:

Schedule 2. European protected species of animals

Schedule 5. European protected species of plants

The protection of Badgers Act 1992

Protected species which might be associated with such a site include bats, owls and other breeding birds. The area around the site might be used by badgers, dormice, amphibians and reptiles, and might contain protected plant species. Zones of influence for great crested newts (GCN) were considered after taking the presence of any nearby ponds into consideration.

3.2. Desk Study

Wrexham Planning Portal was consulted for a review of previous ecological surveys carried out in the area. Magic Maps was consulted for the presence of designated sites and protected habitats.

3.3. Field Survey

The site was examined to establish the presence of any protected species or habitats, and for evidence of use by protected species of animals. Trees and the building were assessed for suitability for use by bats. The site and surrounding habitat was examined for signs of use by other protected species. Maps of the site and surrounding environment were examined to identify any nearby waterbodies suitable for use by great crested newts within an influencing distance of the site. Photographs were taken of all relevant areas. The visual assessment of the site was carried out in accordance with CIEEM guidelines (CIEEM 2017) on 22nd February 2021 by Susan Worsfold BSc (Hons) ACIEEM.

4. Baseline Ecological Conditions/Results

4.1 Designated Sites

The nearest designated site is the Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem and Cadney Mosses (SAC), Fenn's, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses (NNR) and Midlands Meres and Mosses Phase 2 (Ramsar) 660 m south.

4.2 Habitats

Site: Rural, pastoral. The approximate area to be affected is approximately 400 m² of pasture.

Adjacent land: The surrounding land is pastoral with a good network of hedges. There is a large area of woodland 50 m south. There are no rivers within 500 ,

4.3 Species and Species Groups

Plants

The boundary at the north west is a wire fence with some mature oak (*Quercus* sp.), Hawthorn (*Crataegus* sp.) and hazel (*Coryllus avellana*), and the ground flora is dominated by perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*) with some cleavers (*Galium apparine*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*).

Amphibians and Reptiles

None seen during the survey. Eight ponds were apparent on maps within 500 m.

Birds

There was some tress at the boundary which were suitable for use by nesting birds. None were seen at the time of the survey.

Bats

The site is suitable for use by foraging and commuting bats. No evidence of use of the adjacent trees as roosts or resting places by bats was found and they were not considered to have any potential for use by bats.

Badgers

There were no badger setts, tracks or latrines found on the site or within 30 m of the site.

5. Description of the Development

The proposed scheme involves demolition of a building and construction of a larger building with associated access and hardcore area.

6. Assessment of Effects and Mitigation Measures

Designated Sites:

It is not considered that the development will have any significant impact on the river due to the small scale of the proposal.

Habitats:

No priority habitat is affected by the proposal and no net loss of potential roosting or nesting sites should occur if enhancements are provided.

Species:

Birds

The impacts which the proposed work might have on birds should be small, providing that no nests are occupied or being built at the time the work is done. No trees should be pruned between the beginning of March and the end of September unless it can be clearly seen that no nests are present. If birds should gain access to the huts and begin constructing nests during the development, then the work in that area must stop until the young have left the nests.

Bats

There is not considered to be any threat to individual bats or their conservation status, however the site may be used by foraging and commuting bats. Therefore a lighting plan should be designed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust guidelines: <https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>. If bats are found at any stage of the development then work in that area must stop and a licensed bat worker contacted for advice.

Reptiles and amphibians

The nearest ponds are approximately 200 m from the site, therefore there is not considered to be any risk of harm to individual GCN or threat to their conservation status. The ditch is approximately 50 m from the site of the proposed huts, but this was nearly dry and did not appear suitable for use by GCN. There was limited foraging potential on site. However, to prevent killing or injuring any foraging or commuting GCN a method statement should be followed as given on page 16.

Residual Effects

No significant residual effects anticipated.

7. Compensation

None considered appropriate.

8. Enhancement Recommendations

Two wildlife friendly native trees/shrubs to be planted on site, e.g. bird cherry (*Prunus padus*), wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*) *Amelanchier laevis*, spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), alder buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*), strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*) holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) or hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). These would also be attractive and a fairly manageable size.

9. Ecological Constraints

Surveys of this type should ideally be carried out during the spring, summer or autumn to give the best chance of identifying all species present on site. However, it appeared clear that no significant vegetation would be affected and no animals should be harmed if all mitigation measures are taken.

10. Monitoring

None considered appropriate.

11. Conclusions

If the recommended mitigation and enhancement measures are taken the overall ecological impacts of the proposed development will be low due to its small scale and lack of evidence of any rare or threatened species or priority habitat on site.

12. Bibliography

Bat Conservation Trust available at: <http://www.bats.org.uk>

BCT and ILP Guidance Note 8 Bats and Artificial Lighting available at:
<https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora available at: jncc.defra.gov.uk

Gent A.H, Gibson S.D (eds) (1998) *Herpetofauna Workers' Manual*. Peterborough: Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Google Maps available at: <https://maps.google.com/maps>

Great crested newts: surveys and mitigation for development projects available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/great-crested-newts-surveys-and-mitigation-for-development-projects>

Magic Maps available at: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk>

Langton, T., Beckett, C., Foster, J. (2001) *Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook*. Halesworth: Froglife

Natural Resources Wales available at: <https://naturalresources.wales/?lang=en>

Oldham R.S., Keeble J., Swan M.J.S. & Jeffcote M. (2000) Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) *Herpetological Journal* 10 (4), 143-155.

UK BAP Priority Habitats available at: jncc.defra.gov.uk

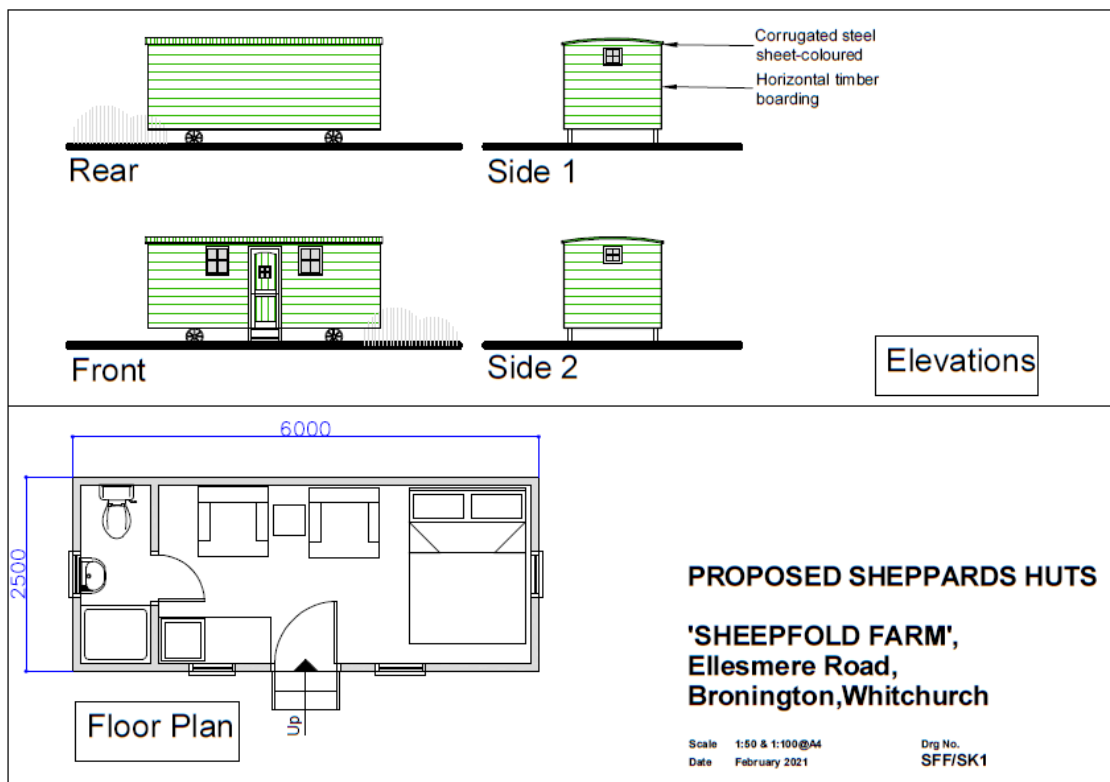
Wildlife and Habitat Conservation available at: <https://www.gov.uk/topic/environmental-management/wildlife-habitat-conservation>

Wrexham Planning Portal available at: <https://www.wrexham.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control>

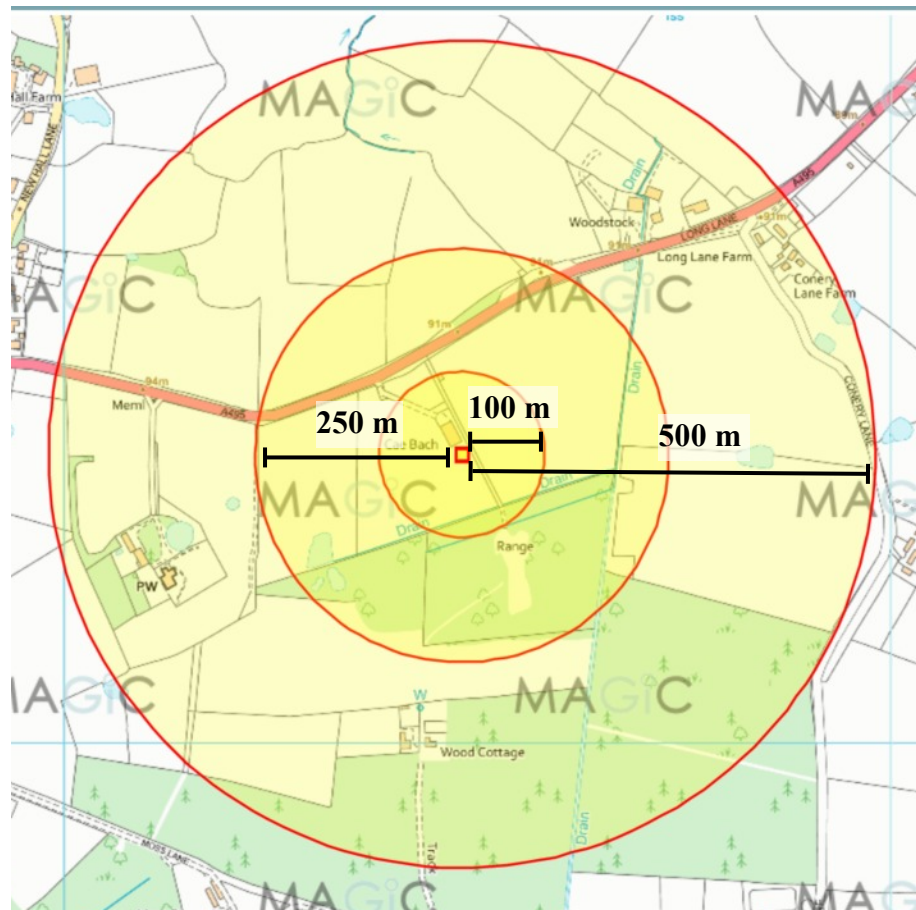
Appendix 13.1: Proposed Plan



Appendix 13.1: Proposed Huts



Appendix 13.2: Location Map, Designated Sites and Zones of Influence



Appendix 13.3: Aerial Photograph



Appendix 13.4: Photographs of the Site



Appendix 13.5: Legislation Relating to Birds

All wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected. It is an offence to intentionally:

kill, injure or take any wild bird,
take, damage or destroy the nest of a Golden Eagle, White-tailed Eagle or Osprey (even if disused),
take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built,
take, damage or destroy an egg or any wild bird,
possess any live or dead wild bird or the egg of any wild bird, or any derivative
Many rare birds are listed on Schedule 1, which makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

disturb a Schedule 1 bird while it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; or
disturb dependent young of such a bird

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) issues licences for specific purposes, so that you can undertake legitimate work without breaking the law. See 'Bird licensing' for more information.

Appendix 13.6: Legislation Relating to Great Crested Newts

Wales is home to six amphibian species. They need fresh water in which to lay their eggs or spawn and enough suitable habitat nearby to spend the rest of their year. They have declined in recent decades as ponds have disappeared or become polluted or acidified. Pond restoration and creation (even in gardens) is a great help to amphibian conservation.

All amphibian species spend a large part of their year foraging on dry land, and they need sheltered places to hibernate. Hedgerows and other areas of semi-natural habitat are vital for their survival.

UK legislation:

The most common species are protected from sale under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are:

Common frog, *Rana temporaria*

Common toad, *Bufo bufo*

Palmate newt, *Triturus helveticus*

Smooth / common newt, *Triturus vulgaris*

The legislation protects them from being sold or offered for sale to protect them from exploitation in the pet trade or laboratory use.

European legislation:

Our rarest amphibians are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (known as 'the Habitats Regulations'). The Habitats Regulations lists the following amphibian European Protected Species (EPS):

Great crested (or warty) newt, *Triturus cristatus*, Natterjack toad, *Bufo calamita*

Under the Habitats Regulations, it is an offence if you:

deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of an EPS,

deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species,

deliberately take or destroy the eggs of such an animal, or

damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal

Disturbance is defined as that which is likely to impair the ability to survive, breed, reproduce, or nurture young, or to hibernate or migrate.

There are other offences relating to possession, transport and sale. See 'Possession and Sale of Protected Species' for more information.

The great crested newt and natterjack toad also receive protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) from the following:

disturbing whilst occupying a place of shelter or protection,

obstructing access to a place of shelter or protection,

sale / offering for sale

Licensing for activities involving European Protected Species:

In certain circumstances Natural Resources Wales may issue licences for activities involving European protected species, that would otherwise be offences.

Appendix 13.7: Method Statement for Prevention of Harm to Great Crested Newts at Sheepfold Farm, Bronington, Whitchurch SY13 3HD

It is a criminal offence to harm a great crested newt.

Great crested newts spend most of their time on land, returning to still water only to breed once they are mature at about 3-4 years of age.

They may travel more than kilometre from their breeding pond.

They move about mostly at night, and by day creep underground or beneath shelter such as stones or logs.

They hibernate during the winter, which is generally from the beginning of November until late March, depending on the weather. Hibernation is underground in burrows made by other small animals or beneath substantial cover such as large stones or piles of logs.

1. The vegetation on site will be kept grazed or mown below 10cm.
2. Ground works will not be undertaken during the active season, i.e. March to October.
3. If any trenches cannot be filled the same day they will have a ramp of earth made at the ends of the trenches, to the full depth of each trench, so that newts can climb out. It is not sufficient to leave a piece of wood against the sides, which would allow small mammals to escape, but not newts, which are not good climbers. The trenches will be inspected carefully before infilling, and any animals carefully removed and released into the surrounding hedgerows (but see para 8 below).
4. Building materials will be stored clear of the ground (say, on pallets) so as to avoid crushing any animals which might seek refuge under them, when the materials are lifted. Any such storage will be on a gravel drive or other hard surface, and not on a lawn or other soft surface.
5. If any potential refuges such as piles of rubble or logs need to be moved before work starts, care will be taken when moving them. This will be done by hand.
6. Any open pipework will be capped overnight. All open trenches and pipework will be inspected at the start of each working day to ensure no animal is trapped.
7. Any excavated material which is not replaced on the same day will either be removed from the site or stored on a hard surface and covered with an impermeable membrane, such as a plastic sheet or tarpaulin, and the edges of the sheet secured so that no amphibians can gain access.
8. If any great crested newt is discovered in the area of the work, then work in that area will stop and a licensed great crested newt worker contacted immediately for advice.

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