

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

Site: The Maelor School, Penley, Wrexham

Ref: 20188/E1

Client: Gareth Morris Construction Ltd



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SUMMARY

At the Maelor School in Penley, Wrexham, planning permission is being sought for the construction of a small teaching block.

In March 2020, a Preliminary Ecological Assessment survey of the site was undertaken.

Ecological data from CONFOD, the ecological database for North Wales, revealed a number of records of European Protected Species, UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) and Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) species within a 1.0 km radius of the site.

None came from the site itself, but within 1.0 km there were records of Common Frog *Rana temporaria*, Common Toad *Bufo bufo*, Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* and Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*, all of which came from beyond significant barriers such as roads and houses.

There were several bat records for the area. Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* was the only known species, with several records of unidentified species. The most recent record was from 2017 of Common Pipistrelles recorded foraging approximately 450 metres from the site.

Other mammal records included Otter *Lutra lutra*, Badger *Meles meles*, Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*, Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus* and Polecat *Mustela putorius*, all of which came from beyond barriers such as roads and houses.

There were a number of bird records, including several of High Conservation Concern (RSPB Red List), such as a Starling *Sternus vulgaris*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* and Curlew *Numenius Arquata* amongst others.

The desk study also revealed no statutory sites fell within the search area, whilst there were four non-statutory sites, with the closest; Llanerch-Panna and Penley Bank LWS located approximately 375 metres from the application site.

Due to the distances from the sites and the presence of barriers such as houses and roads, it is considered the proposed development will have no impact on the wildlife sites or citation species associated with the wildlife sites.

The survey visit took place on 13th March 2020, in cool but bright conditions with a light wind.

The site encompassed a small area within the existing grounds of The Maelor School, and comprised entirely of hard standing.

There were no vegetative habitats on, or within the footprint of the proposed building.

No rare vascular plants were found and there were no invasive or notifiable species.

No birds were recorded on the application site itself, and no potential nesting habitat was present.

Nearby trees and hedgerow were noted 10 metres outside of the application site and these habitats are thought to remain undisturbed.

However, since all in-use bird's nests and their contents are protected from damage or destruction, any tree or shrub removal or works which may affect a nest should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August inclusive. If this time frame cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the trees, shrubs or structures to be removed should be undertaken prior to clearance. Work should not be carried out within a minimum of 5.0 metres of any in-use nest, although this distance could be more depending on the sensitivity of the species.

There were no structures or trees with potential for roosting and/or hibernating bats within the application site, whilst the site itself had low value to foraging bats.

There were no signs of or potential for Badger, Water Vole or Otter, whilst the site also lacked any suitable habitats suitable for reptiles or amphibians.

Since the site comprised entirely of hard standing, it was concluded that there was no potential for significant invertebrate assemblages, in particular those species listed as a priority in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and/or Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Indeed, none were noted.

If excavations are to be undertaken, it should be noted that open trenches could potentially trap wildlife, especially if these fill up with water. Escape routes should therefore be provided if trenches cannot be infilled immediately. These can be in the form of branches or boards placed on the bottom of the trench, with their upper ends above ground level and touching the sides, or sloping ends left in trenches.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and survey objectives

At the Maelor School in Penley, Wrexham, planning permission is being sought for the construction of a small teaching block.

In March 2020, a Preliminary Ecological Assessment survey of the site was undertaken.

These surveys were undertaken to determine the presence of any important habitats or species which might be impacted on by the proposed development.

No ecological data/desk study was undertaken as part of the survey, as the proposed development was small in scale and is considered unlikely to impact on any habitats and/or species within the wider area.

1.2 Site description

The site encompassed a small area within the existing grounds of The Maelor School, and comprised entirely of hard standing.

There were no vegetative habitats on, or within the footprint of the proposed building.

No rare vascular plants were found and there were no invasive or notifiable species.

The Ordnance Survey Grid Reference is SJ 41643 39785 centred on the middle of the site.

1.3 Proposed works

The proposal is for the construction of a small teaching block, built upon an existing area of hard standing.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk study

A detailed desk study was undertaken to determine the nature conservation designations and protected species that had been recorded within a 1.0 km radius of the site. This involved contacting statutory and non-statutory organisations, and then assimilating and reviewing the data provided.

The consultees for the desk study were:

- ❑ Multi Agency Geographic Information (MAGIC) website www.magic.gov.uk;
- ❑ National Biodiversity Network Gateway website;
- ❑ CONFOD.

2.2 Habitat survey

A Phase 1 Habitat Survey was carried out across the whole of the survey site. It was conducted using standard JNCC (2003) techniques and methodologies.

The re-survey visit took place on 13th March 2020, in cool, damp conditions with a light wind.

2.3 Protected species survey

During the surveys the potential for other protected and important species was assessed. This included European Protected Species, legally protected species and Local Biodiversity Action Plan Species (and habitats).

2.4 Constraints

The survey was carried out early in the season, however it was considered the habitats present could be identified accurately.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Desk study

3.1.1 Designated sites

There were no statutory sites within the 1.0km search radius.

Non-Statutory Sites

There were four non-statutory sites, with the closest; Llanerch-Panna and Penley Bank LWS located approximately 375 metres from the application site.

Due to the distances from the sites and the presence of barriers such as houses and roads, it is considered the proposed development will have no impact on the wildlife sites or citation species associated with the wildlife sites.

3.1.2 Protected species

Ecological data from CONFOD, the ecological database for North Wales, revealed a number of records of European Protected Species, UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) and Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) species within a 1.0 km radius of the site.

None came from the site itself, but within 1.0 km there were records of Common Frog, Common Toad, Smooth Newt and Great Crested Newt, all of which came from beyond significant barriers such roads and houses.

There were several bat records for the area. Common Pipistrelle was the only known species, with several records of unidentified species. The most recent record was from 2017 of Common Pipistrelles recorded foraging approximately 450 metres from the site.

Other mammal records included Otter, Badger, Hedgehog, Brown Hare and Polecat, all of which came from beyond barriers such as roads and houses.

There were a number of bird records, including several of High Conservation Concern (RSPB Red List), such a Starling, House Sparrow and Curlew amongst others.

3.2 Habitat survey

3.2.1 Habitat descriptions

The following habitats were recorded across the site:

- ❑ Hard standing.

These are shown on the Phase 1 Habitat Survey map in Appendix 1, with the target notes (where applicable) in Appendix 2.

Hard standing

The site encompassed a small area within the existing grounds of The Maelor School, and comprised entirely of hard standing (Figs. 1, 2, 3 and 4).



Figs. 1& 2 Hard standing



Figs. 3 & 4 Hard standing

3.2.2 Flora

There were no vegetative habitats on, or within the footprint of the proposed building.

No rare vascular plants were found and there were no invasive or notifiable species.

3.3 Protected species survey

3.3.1 Bats

There were no structures or trees with potential for roosting and/or hibernating bats within the application site, whilst the site itself had low value to foraging bats.

3.3.2 Badgers

There were no signs of Badger *Meles meles* activity.

3.3.3 Otters

No evidence of Otter *Lutra lutra* presence was found.

3.3.4 Water Voles

No evidence of Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* presence was found.

3.3.5 Birds

No birds were recorded on the application site itself, and no potential nesting habitat was present.

A full list of species observed is given in Appendix 3.

3.3.6 Reptiles

The site lacked suitable habitat for reptiles.

3.3.7 Great Crested Newts

The site lacked suitable habitat for Great Crested Newts and/or any other amphibians, whilst all records of the species within the desk study search area came from beyond significant barriers such as roads and houses.

3.3.8 Invertebrates

Since the site was dominated by hard standing it was concluded that there was no potential for significant invertebrate assemblages, in particular those species listed as a priority in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and/or Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Indeed, none were noted.

3.3.9 Other species

No other protected or LBAP species were observed during the site visit.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Site evaluation

The site was considered to have negligible wildlife value.

This was because the site was small in extent and comprised entirely of hard standing.

No birds were recorded on the application site itself, and no potential nesting habitat was present.

Nearby trees and hedgerow were noted 10 metres outside of the application site and these habitats are thought to remain undisturbed.

There were no structures or trees with potential for roosting and/or hibernating bats within the application site, whilst the site itself had low value to foraging bats.

There were no signs of or potential for Badger, Water Vole or Otter, whilst the site also lacked any suitable habitats suitable for reptiles or amphibians. Furthermore, records of these species/groups within the desk study search radius, all came from beyond barriers such as roads and houses.

Since the site was largely buildings and hardstanding, it was concluded that there was no potential for significant invertebrate assemblages, in particular those species listed as a priority in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and/or Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Indeed, none were noted.

4.2 Possible impacts of proposed work and recommendations

Nearby trees and hedgerow were noted 10 metres outside of the application site and these habitats are thought to remain undisturbed.

However, since all in-use bird's nests and their contents are protected from damage or destruction, any tree or shrub removal or works which may affect a nest should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August inclusive. If this time frame cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the trees, shrubs or structures to be removed should be undertaken prior to clearance.

Work should not be carried out within a minimum of 5.0 metres of any in-use nest, although this distance could be more depending on the sensitivity of the species.

At all times care will be taken when carrying out earthwork, as small mammals could be present. Any small mammals disturbed or uncovered will either be caught by hand and relocated to a safe area, or left to vacate the work site in their own time.

If excavations are to be undertaken, it should be noted that open trenches could potentially trap wildlife, especially if these fill up with water. Escape routes should therefore be provided if trenches cannot be infilled immediately. These can be in the form of branches or boards placed on the bottom of the trench, with their upper ends above ground level and touching the sides, or sloping ends left in trenches.

4.3 Further surveys

No further surveys are required.

5. REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

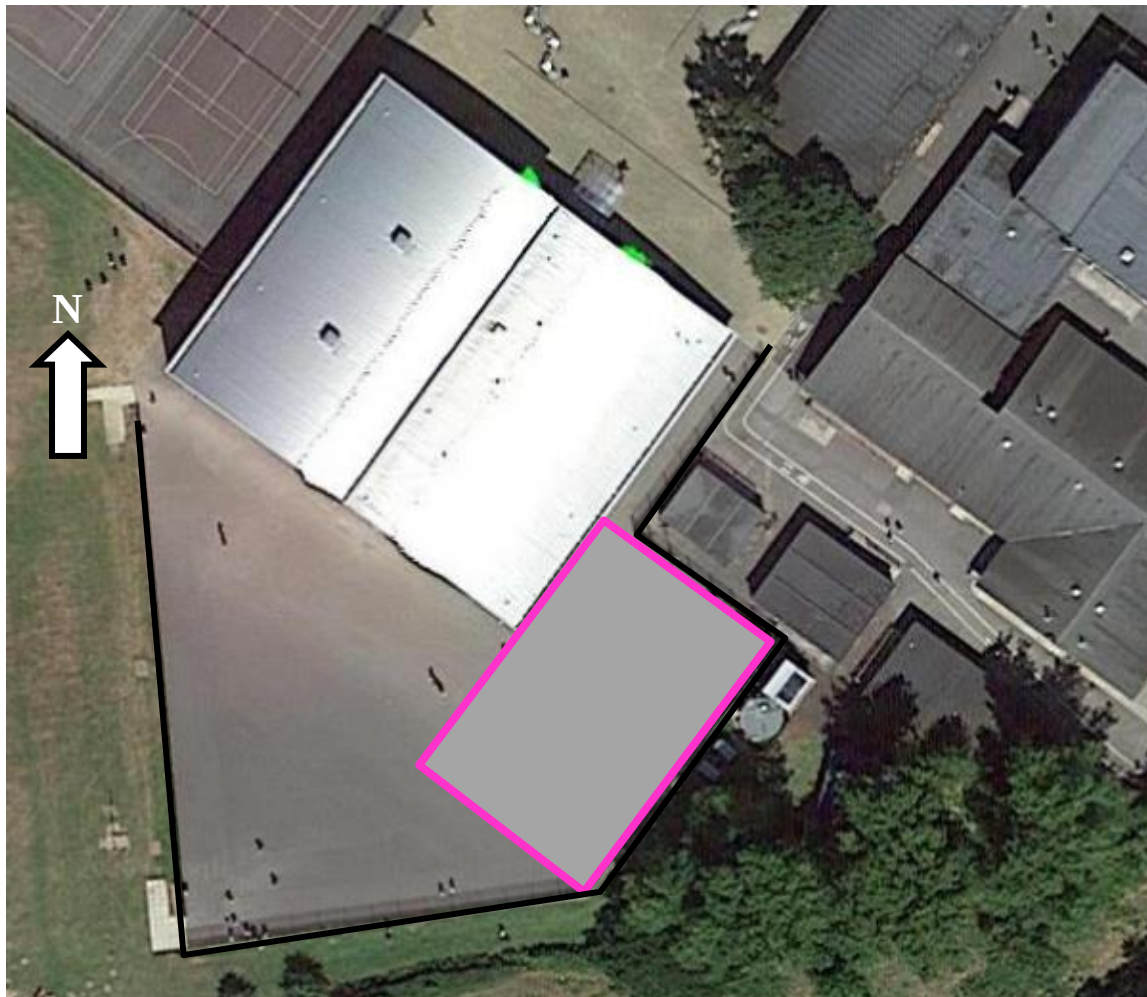
Appendix 1: Phase 1 Habitat Survey Map

Appendix 2: Target Notes

Appendix 3: Bird species list

Appendix 4: Relevant legislation

Appendix 1: Phase 1 Habitat Survey Map



(Not to scale)

Legend		
	Survey boundary	 Fence
		 Hard standing

Appendix 2: Target Notes

No Target Notes

Appendix 3: Bird species list

No Birds were recorded

Appendix 4: Relevant legislation

5.1 – Birds

In Britain, all wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. There are penalties for:

- ☐ *Killing, injuring or capturing them, or attempting any of these;*
- ☐ *Taking or damaging the nest whilst in use;*
- ☐ *Taking or destroying the eggs.*

5.2 – Bats

In England, Scotland and Wales, all bat species are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) (as amended), through inclusion in Schedule 5. In England and Wales this Act has been amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW), which adds an extra offence, makes species offences arrestable, increases the time limits for some prosecutions, and increases penalties.

All bats are also included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994, (or Northern Ireland 1995) (the Habitats Regulations), which defines 'European protected species of animals'.

The above legislation can be summarised thus (Mitchell-Jones and McLeish, 2004):

- ☐ *Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture (or take) bats;*
- ☐ *Deliberately disturb bats (whether in a roost or not);*
- ☐ *Recklessly disturb roosting bats or obstruct access to their roosts;*
- ☐ *Damage or destroy roosts;*
- ☐ *Possess or transport a bat or any part of a part of a bat, unless acquired legally;*
- ☐ *Sell (or offer for sale) or exchange bats, or parts of bats.*

The word 'roost' is not used in the legislation, but is used here for simplicity. The actual wording is 'any structure or place which any wild animal...uses for shelter or protection' (WCA), or 'breeding site or resting place' (Habitats Regulations).

As bats generally have both a winter and a summer roost, the legislation is clear that all roosts are protected whether bats are in residence at the time or not.