

Ecological Impact Assessment **at**

Grango Lane, Ponciau,

Wrexham LL14 1ER

Grid Ref. SJ29424695

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1. Summary

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

The proposed scheme entails the construction of three dwellings on an area of disused land.

The land was examined to establish the presence of or evidence of use by protected species of animals. A visual inspection was carried out to assess the potential or actual use of the site by bats, great crested newts (GCN), badgers, dormice and birds.

Impacts during the development should be low with respect to birds provided that no bird nests are constructed or occupied while work is taking place. Adjacent trees should not be pruned between the beginning of March and the end of December to avoid potential destruction of nests. 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. Impacts with respect to GCN, badgers, bats, birds and dormice are also considered to be very low.

No rare or threatened species of plants or animals were found on site or near the site. Bird and bat boxes are recommended as enhancement.

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 72725:OTH:CSAB:2016 (Natural Resources Wales);

Licensed great crested newt worker, registration number 2016-19947-CLS-CLS (NE) and 72936-OTH-SA:2016 (NRW)

This report was commissioned by John Hughes-Lloyd of JHL Consultants Ltd..

The area of the site, at Ponciau, Wrexham, is approximately 0.3 ha.

The proposed scheme entails the construction of three dwellings.

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 extended phase 1 habitat survey, while also 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 to evaluate the impacts of the development in the absence of any licensed mitigation.

3.2. Desk Study

A data search was commissioned from Cofnod to identify any records of protected species on or near the site. Three records of common pipistrelle bat were recorded within 100 m and a brown long eared bat and hedgehog record at 132 m. The nearest great crested newt record was 631 m south east. 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 were assessed for suitability for use by bats. The site and surrounding habitat was examined for signs of use by badgers and dormice. 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. The variety of plant species was mapped according to the convention of Phase 1 habitat surveys as described by the JNCC (2010). Photographs were taken of all areas.

The visual assessment of the site was carried out in accordance with CIEEM guidelines (CIEEM 2017) on 10th October 2019 by Susan Worsfold BSc (Hons) ACIEEM.

4. Baseline Ecological Conditions/Results

4.1 Designated Sites

The nearest designated site is Johnstown Newt Sites, (Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Area of Conservation) 700 m south east.

4.2 Habitats

The site is on the outskirts of a village 4 km north west of the nearest town of Wrexham. The approximate area of the land to be affected is 0.3 ha. It was historically used as grazing for horses but is now dominated by ruderal vegetation and has been used as a dumping area for various household items and hardcore associated with the building work adjacent. A full species list follows.

There are several mature trees forming part of the boundaries. None of these are to be affected by the proposed development.

Adjacent land: There is a school and school field to the north. The remaining immediately surrounding area is residential. There is a small area of deciduous woodland 180 m north east. There are small areas with several trees nearby. The nearest pond is 370 m south east. There are no other ponds apparent within 500 m. There are no rivers within 500 m. There are few hedgerows near the site.

4.3 Species and Species Groups

Plants: Species found on site:

Sow thistle (<i>Sonchus arvensis</i>)	Hazel (<i>Coryllus avellana</i>)	Hawthorn (<i>Cratageous monogyna</i>)
Perennial ryegrass (<i>Lolium perenne</i>)	Bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>)	Dock (<i>Rumex</i> sp.)
Common nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>)	Ash (<i>Fraxinus exelsior</i>)	Blackthorn (<i>Prunus spinosa</i>)
Bindweed (<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>)	White clover (<i>Trifolium repens</i>)	Plantain (<i>Plantago</i> sp.)
Oak (<i>Quercus</i> sp.)	Ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>)	Ragwort (<i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i>)
Creeping buttercup (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>)	Foxglove (<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>)	Creeping thistle (<i>Cirsium arvense</i>)
Rosebay willowherb (<i>Epilobium angustifolium</i>)		

Birds

The adjacent trees could provide food and shelter for birds and also nesting potential.

Bats

The site is suitable for use by foraging and commuting bats. The adjacent trees were not suitable for use by bats.

Badgers

There were no badger setts, tracks or latrines found on the site or within 30 m of the site. The vegetation and terrain was not favourable for foraging badgers or for the construction of setts.

Dormice

No evidence of use by dormice was found and the site was not favourable for use by them

No rare or threatened species of plants were found on site or near the site.

No species of conservation value or Schedule 9 species were seen on site.

5. Description of the Development

The proposed scheme entails the construction of three dwellings.

6. Assessment of Effects and Mitigation Measures

Designated Sites:

It is not considered that the development will have any significant impact on any designated sites due to the small scale of the development and distance from the sites.

Habitats:

No priority habitat is affected by the proposal. There were no hedgerows and no trees or shrubs are planned to be removed.

Species:

Amphibians and Reptiles

There is one pond apparent within 500 m of the site (370 m south east). Therefore it is considered highly unlikely that the development would harm any individual GCN, or affect their conservation status.

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. The adjacent trees should not be pruned between the beginning of March and the end of September to avoid potential destruction of nests.

If birds should gain access to the new buildings, and begin building nests during the work, then the work in that area must stop until the young have left the nests.

Bats

The site is suitable for use by foraging and commuting bats. Bat records were identified nearby. A lighting plan should be designed in accordance with the 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/>

Residual Effects

The loss of a small area of low quality habitat will have a small effect on future foraging and commuting for some species.

7. Compensation

None considered necessary.

8. Enhancement Recommendations (See annex 13.5).

Bats: A bat box e.g. Schwegler 1FF to be fitted externally to one of the new buildings. Further information is given in the bat box information pack available at <http://www.bats.org.uk/index.php>.

Birds: One woodcrete nests suitable for small birds such as robin, blackbird, tit species and sparrow to be incorporated into each of the new buildings.

House Sparrow Terrace - Wooden (or woodcrete) nest box with 3 sub-divisions to support 3 nesting pairs. To be placed under the eaves of buildings or incorporated into walls. Entrance holes: 32mm diameter. Dimensions: H310 x W370 x D185mm. Also suitable for tits, redstarts and spotted flycatchers. Place at least 2 m from the ground.

A small area (annex 13.5) is proposed to be planted with a variety of wildflowers, shrubs and native trees. Bird cherry (*Prunus padus*), wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*) and rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) are recommended as they are good for wildlife as well as being attractive for humans.

9. Ecological Constraints

None identified.

10. Monitoring

None considered necessary.

11. Conclusions

If the recommended mitigation, compensation 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.

12. Bibliography

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

CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing*. Winchester: Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management

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>

JNCC, (2010), *Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey - a technique for environmental audit*, ISBN 0 86139 636 7

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

The National Vegetation Classification available at: jncc.defra.gov.uk

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

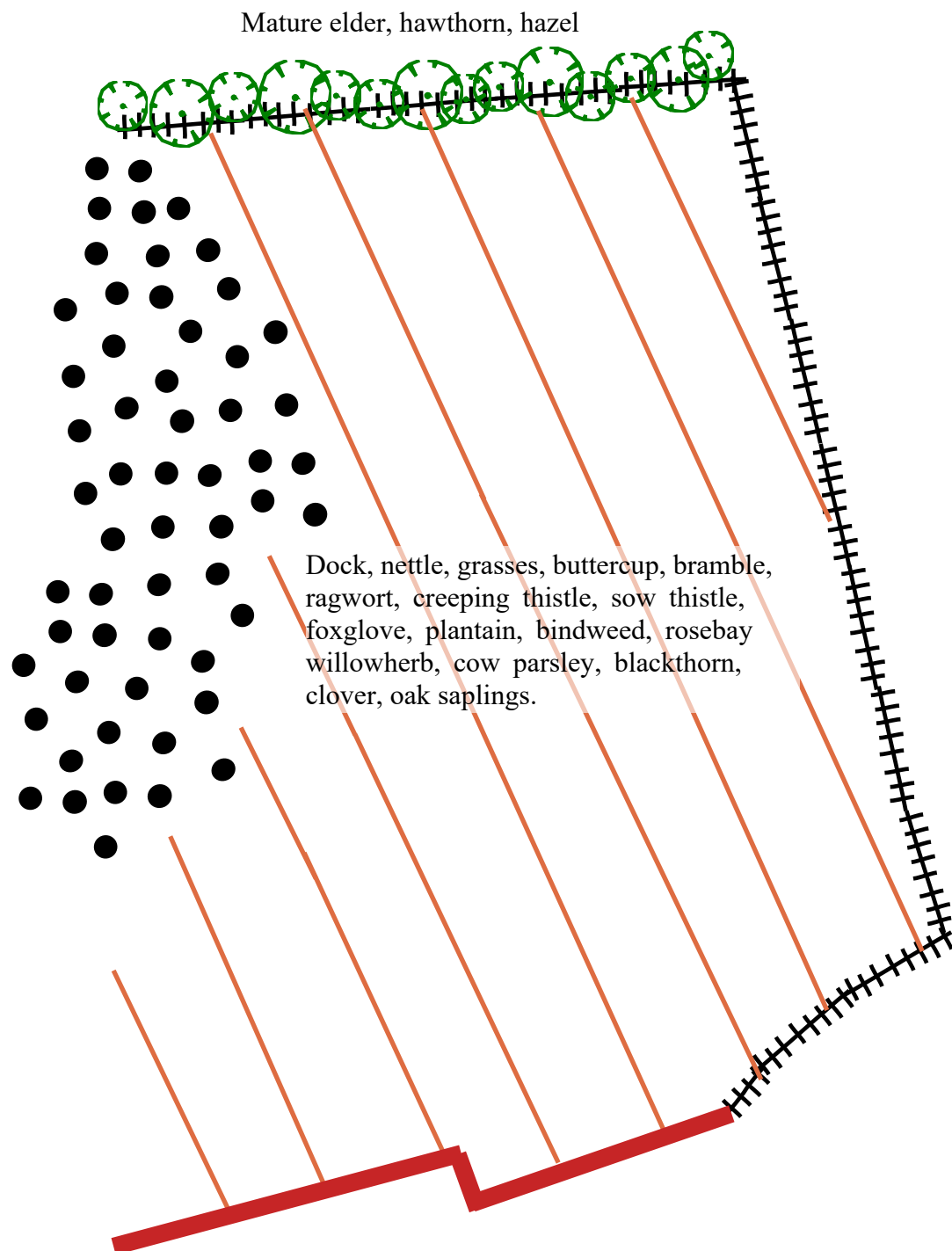
Natural Resources Wales available at: <https://naturalresources.wales/?lang=en>

Wrexham Council Planning Portal available at:
<http://planning.wrexham.gov.uk/Planning/lg/GFPlanningSearch.page>

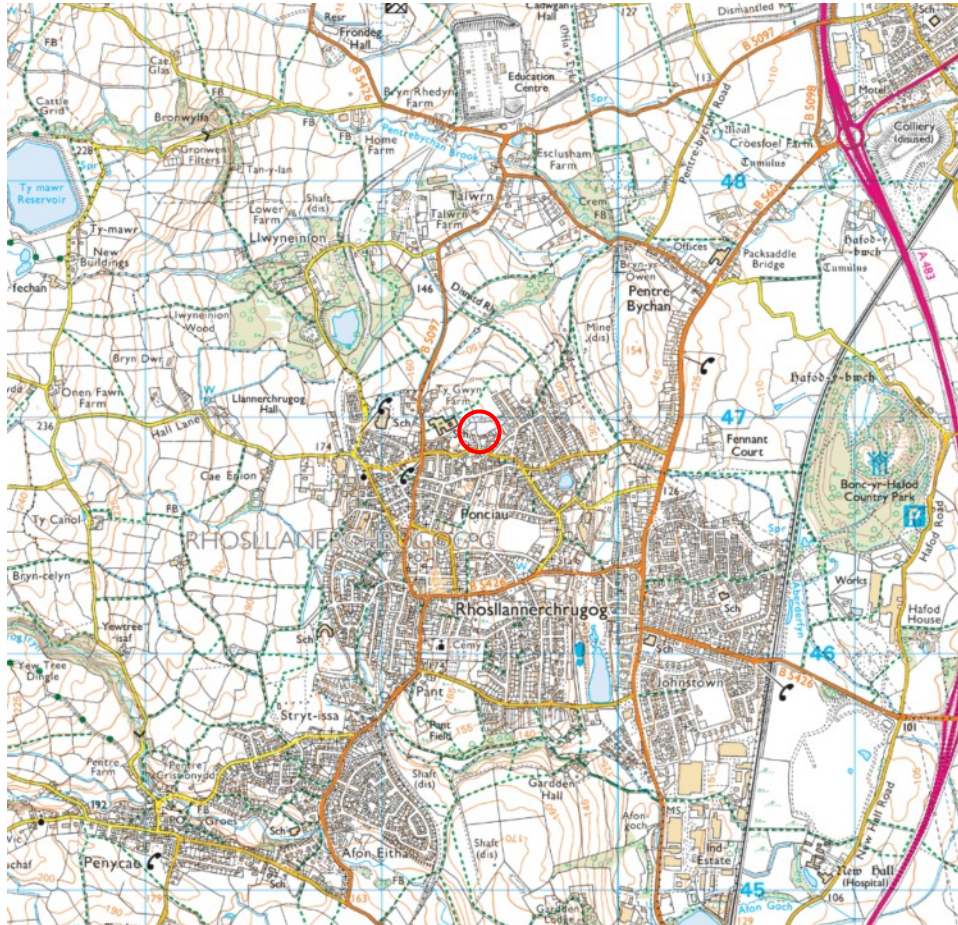
UK BAP Priority Habitats available at: jncc.defra.gov.uk

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

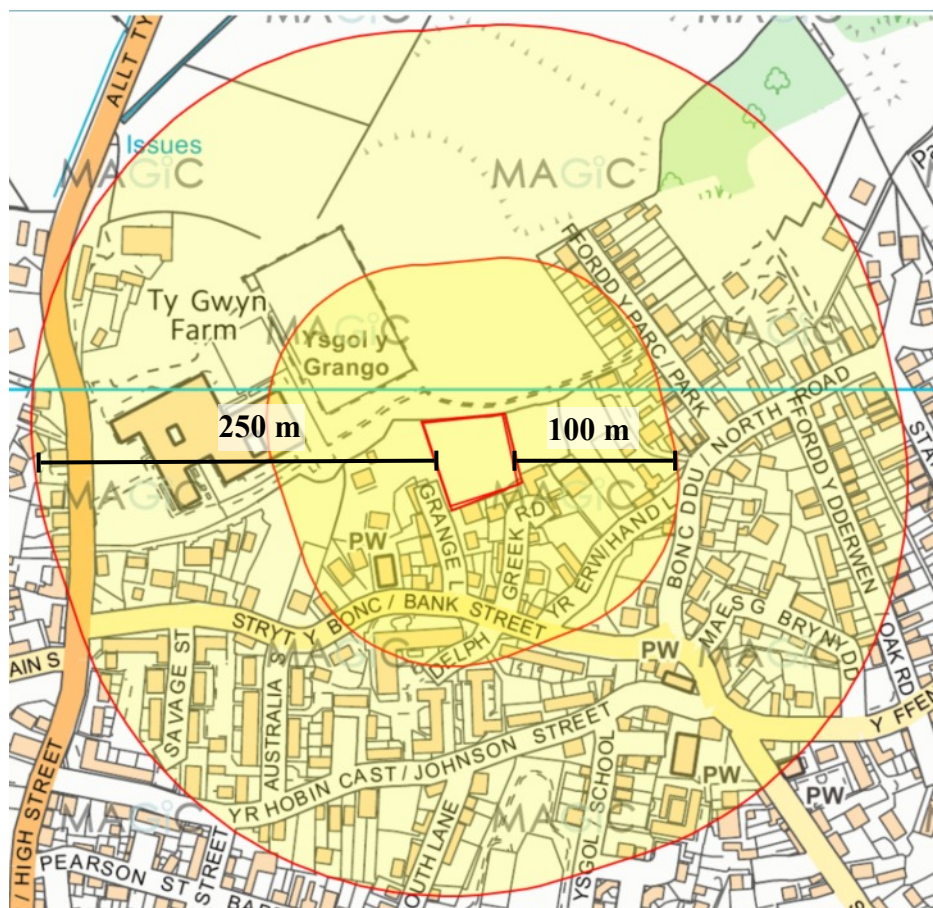
Appendix 13.1: Survey Diagram



Appendix 13.2: OS Location Map



Appendix 13.3: Map Showing Zones of Influence for Great Crested Newts

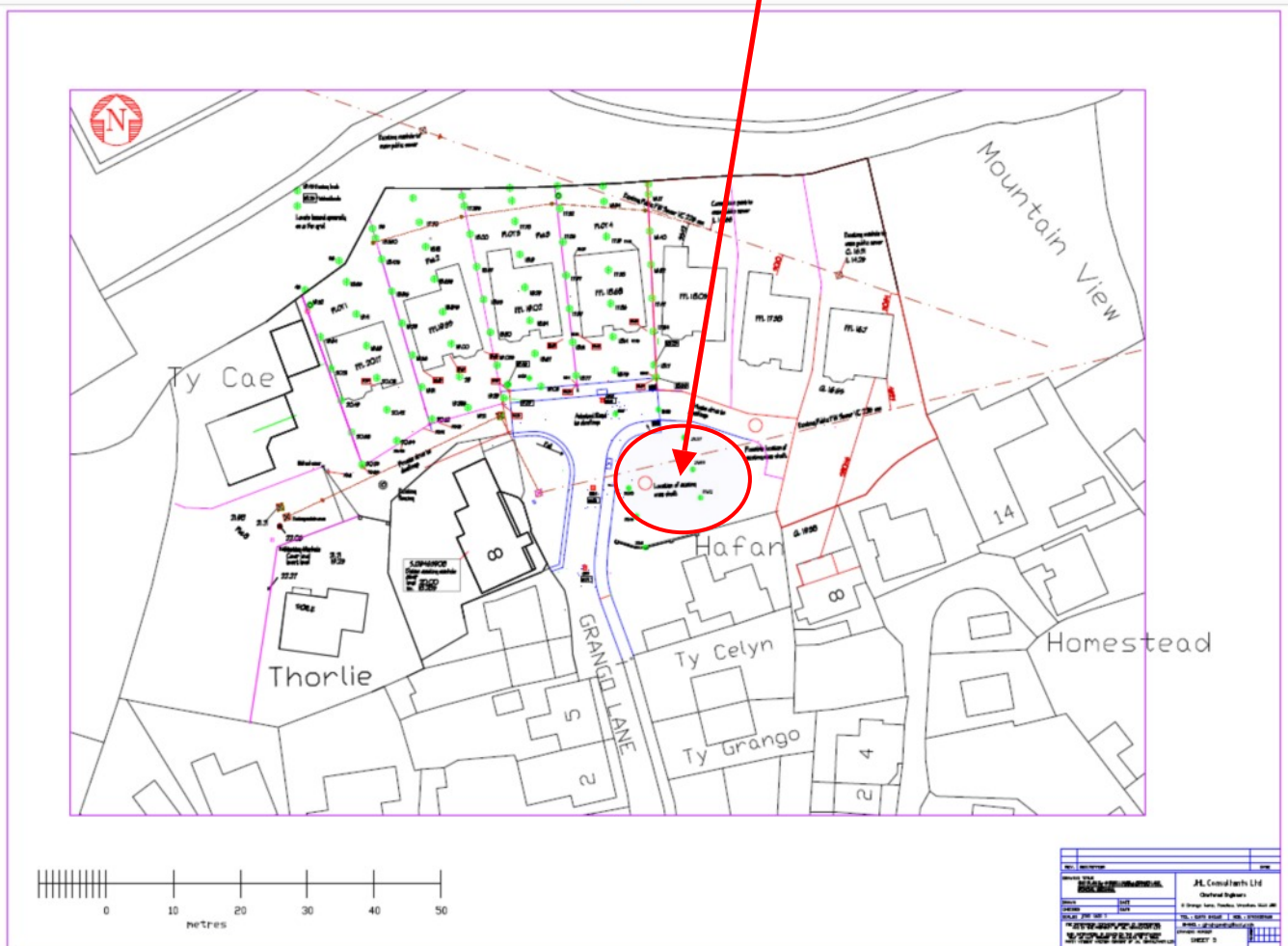


Appendix 13.4: Aerial Photograph

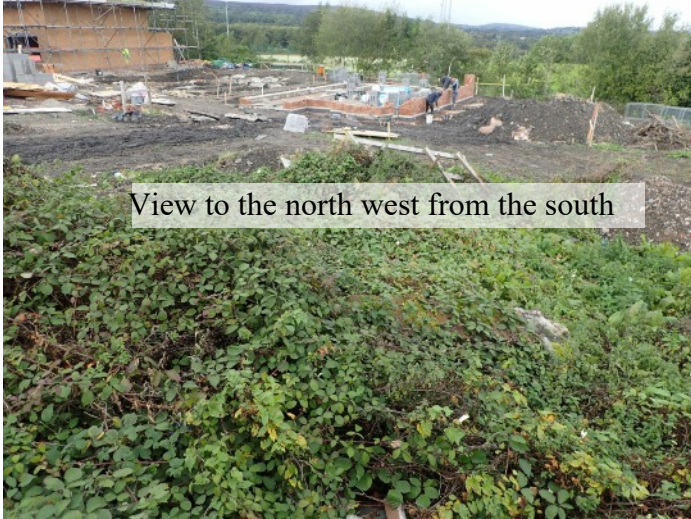


Appendix 13.5: Proposed Plan

Area of proposed flower/shrub /tree planting



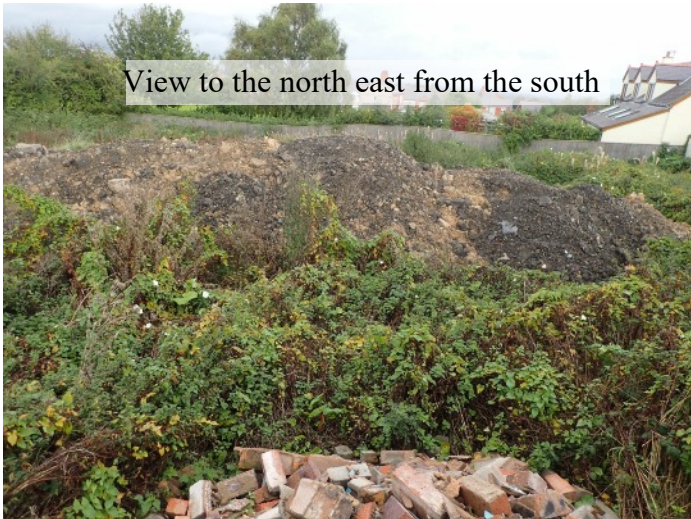
Appendix 13.6: Photographs of the Site



View to the north west from the south



View to the north from the south



View to the north east from the south



View to the north east from the south



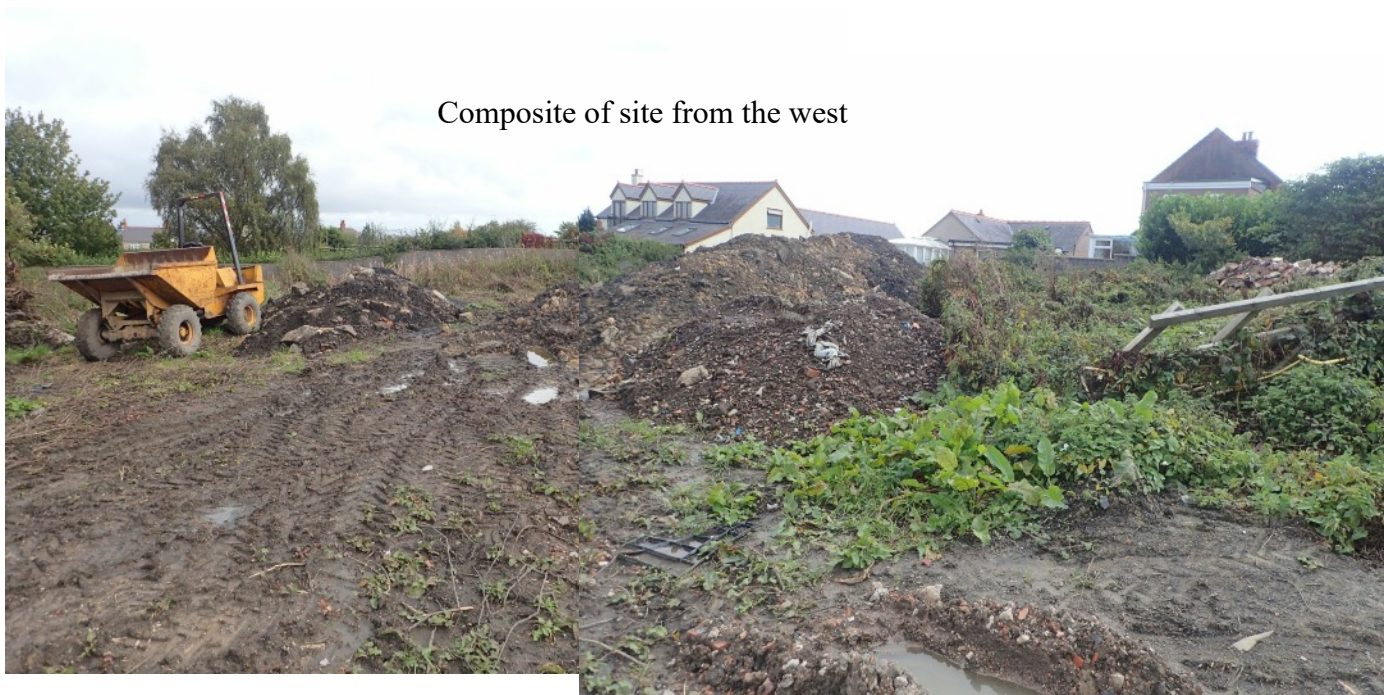
North east section



East section, looking south

Appendix 13.6: Photographs of the Site

Composite of site from the west



East section from the south



Appendix 13.7: Legislation Relating to Birds

All wild bird species, their eggs and nests are protected by law. You must always try to avoid harming birds or to use measures which do not kill or injure them before considering taking harmful action.

In most cases you should be able to avoid harming wild birds by:

- timing your work to avoid the breeding season
- using a range of methods that deter but don't harm them

In exceptional cases the law allows certain exemptions to permit legal activities (such as a development with planning permission) and where avoiding harm isn't possible.

What you must not do:

You're breaking the law if you:

- intentionally kill, injure or take wild birds
- intentionally take, damage or destroy a wild bird's nest while it's being used or built
- intentionally take or destroy a wild bird's egg
- possess, control or transport live or dead wild birds, or parts of them, or their eggs
- sell wild birds or put them on display for sale
- use prohibited methods to kill or take wild birds

Some birds, known as 'schedule 1 birds', eg barn owls, have extra legal protection. For these bird species it's also an offence to do the following, either intentionally or by not taking enough care:

- disturb them while they're nesting, building a nest, in or near a nest that contains their young
- disturb their dependent young

You could get an unlimited fine and up to 6 months in prison for each offence if you're found guilty.

Activities that can harm birds

These activities can affect wild birds, particularly during breeding season:

- trimming or cutting trees, bushes, hedges and rough vegetation
- renovating, converting or demolishing a building
- creating disturbance, eg noise, lighting and vibration
- taking actions to prevent problems, eg shooting birds or removing nests

When you can get a licence

There are no licensing purposes to permit development or construction but there are ways you can continue development or construction when birds are present. These activities should rely upon the legal exemptions. You must make sure that you can comply fully with the terms of the exemption so that you don't break the law.

You can apply for a licence from Natural England or Natural Resources Wales in certain circumstances and for certain problems.

Licences are available for disturbing or harming birds for a limited number of reasons that include:

- preserve public health and safety
- preserve air safety
- do work for science, education or research
- prevent damage to crops or animal feed
- conserve plants and animals (including other wild birds)
- prevent damage to fisheries
- take part in photography, falconry, keeping or breeding birds

Appendix 13.8: Cofnod Data Search Summary

