

EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY OF LAND OFF HOLT ROAD, WREXHAM

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**RACHEL
HACKING
ECOLOGY**

Bowden Hall, Bowden Lane, Marple, Stockport, Cheshire, SK6 6ND

Tel: 0161 465 8971

mail@rachelhackingecology.co.uk

www.rachelhackingecology.co.uk

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. METHODOLOGY	3
3. RESULTS	
HABITATS	4
INVASIVE SPECIES	7
PROTECTED SPECIES	7
PROTECTED SITES	8
4. ASSESSMENT	10
5. RECOMMENDATIONS	12
6. REFERENCES	13
PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP	

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2018 by Euro Garages Limited, to undertake an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of a piece of land off Holt Road, Wrexham. The site will be the subject of a planning application for the provision of two drive-thru restaurants and associated car parking and landscaping.
- 1.2 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 site comprises rank grassland, with scattered scrub, bordered by woodland and hedgerows. The A5156 and residential development border the site to the west, the grassland habitat extends to the south and Wrexham Golf Course borders the site to the north and east.
- 1.3 The aims of the survey were to:
- Describe and map the habitats present on the site
 - Assess the potential for protected species to be present on the site or just outside the immediate site boundary
 - Identify where further survey may be necessary.

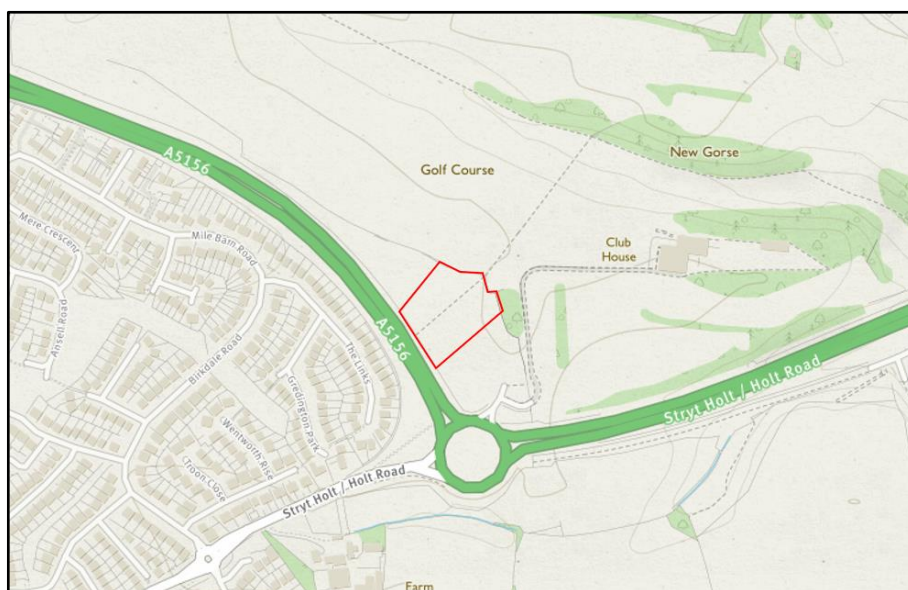


Figure 1 showing the location of the site within the red line boundary

2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 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 each habitat and the abundance of each species was noted. All botanical nomenclature follows Stace, 2010. A Phase 1 map was produced showing habitat boundaries.
- 2.2 During the Phase 1 survey, the habitats were assessed for their potential to support protected species. This included, 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 and assessing the potential for any buildings or mature trees to be used by bats.
- 2.3 The site was also surveyed for invasive, non-native plant species such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed.
- 2.4 Rosie Fisher and Joe Walters (Ecologists) undertook the survey on 14th December 2018. The weather was dry and bright. Both surveyors are fully experienced with habitat and protected species surveys and fully trained. December is a sub-optimal time of the year for botanical work, however, due to the type of habitats present on site, a thorough assessment could be undertaken. There were no constraints to the survey as the site was fully accessible.

3.0 RESULTS

HABITATS

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

Neutral Grassland/Tall, Ruderal Herb Mosaic

- 3.2 The majority of the site comprises neutral grassland with tall, ruderal vegetation (see Photograph 1). The grassland is tussocky and has a high sward height. Grass species present include Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, Tall Fescue *Festuca arundinacea* and Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*. Small herbs include Creeping Cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and Dove's-foot Crane's-bill *Geranium mole*. Tall, ruderal species present include Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Common Sorrel *Rumex acetosa*, Imperforate St John's-wort *Hypericum tetrapterum* and Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare*.



Photograph 1 showing the neutral grassland with tall, ruderal herb

Broad-leaved Woodland

- 3.3 A small woodland occurs off-site to the east and the tree canopy extends into the site (see Photograph 2). The tree species are mainly Willow *Salix* sp., with some Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*. The understorey comprises Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* saplings, Ivy *Hedera helix*, Common Nettle *Urtica dioica* and Cleavers *Galium aparine*.



Photograph 2 showing the broad-leaved woodland

Continuous Scrub

- 3.4 Two patches of dense scrub occur on site (see Photograph 3). This habitat is dominated by Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. Species occasionally intermixed include Prickly Sow-thistle *Sonchus asper*, White Dead-nettle *Lamium album* and Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*.



Photograph 3 showing a patch of continuous scrub

Scattered Scrub

- 3.5 Individual stands of Gorse *Ulex europaeus* occur within the grassland (see Photograph 4). These are mapped as scattered scrub.



Photograph 4 showing scattered scrub in the grassland

Bracken

- 3.6 An area of Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* is present on the north-west border of the site (see Photograph 5).



Photograph 5 showing the Bracken on site

Hedgerows

- 3.7 An intact hedgerow lines the western boundary of the site. This is dominated by Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* with occasional Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Hazel *Corylus avellana* and Dog Rose *Rosa canina* agg. A tall, ruderal understorey is present, which comprises False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris* and Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*. A defunct hedgerow occurs on the eastern boundary (see Photograph 6). A fence runs along this and it has a similar species composition as the intact hedgerow.



Photograph 6 showing the defunct hedgerow

INVASIVE SPECIES

- 3.8 No invasive, non-native species, as listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), were found on site.

PROTECTED SPECIES

Badger

- 3.9 Badgers *Meles meles* are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. This Act, for example, makes 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.
- 3.10 The site was searched for evidence of Badger presence including; setts, paths, latrines and hairs on fences. No Badger setts were found on site or immediately adjacent to the site. One small mammal hole was found within the scrub on the north-eastern corner of the site. This was blocked with vegetation and showed no recent use. Mammal tracks exist throughout the grassland and scrub. A Badger latrine was found at the

southern edge of the site. Fox *Vulpes vulpes* dung was found just south of the site. It is likely that both Badger and Fox use the site for foraging.

Bats

- 3.11 All bat species are European Protected Species under the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994. This is implemented in the UK through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Bats are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC, 2006).
- 3.12 No buildings are present on site. Several trees occur within the site. These were all inspected from the ground for potential bat roosting features, such as cavities and limb damage. No trees were found to support such features that could be used by bats and all offer negligible bat roost potential. Bats may use the linear features, such as the woodland edge and hedgerows, for foraging and commuting along.

Great Crested Newt

- 3.13 Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* is a European Protected Species (EPS). It is listed under Annex IV of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora. This is implemented in the UK through The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the species is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 3.14 No ponds exist on site and no field ponds could be found within 250 metres of the site. The proposed development site supports suitable terrestrial habitat for Great Crested Newt. The tall grassland, ruderal vegetation and scrub provide cover for Great Crested Newt.

Nesting Birds

- 3.15 All bird species are protected at their nest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 3.16 The hedgerows, dense scrub and trees provide suitable nesting habitat for birds.

PROTECTED SITES

- 3.17 No statutory protected sites exist on the site or immediately adjacent to the site. One statutory protected site lies within 3km of the development site. This is Vicarage Moss Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), part of the Meres & Mosses Ramsar Site. This lies 1.7km to the north of the site, separated by Wrexham Golf Club, farmland and roads.
- 3.18 The site is within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone, which lists certain types of development that may have a deleterious impact on protected sites nearby. The type of development proposed is not included within the risk criteria.

- 3.19 No non-statutory protected sites fall on, or lie adjacent to, the development site. One non-statutory protected site lies within 1km of the site. This is Borrass Bog Local Wildlife Site, 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 proposed development site supports unmanaged grassland, with tall, ruderal vegetation and scrub establishing in places. The vegetation offers a limited pollen and nectar source for invertebrates. The scrub and tall, ruderal vegetation offer cover for wildlife. The trees, hedgerows and scrub offer nesting habitat for birds.

Development Context

- 4.3 The proposed development involves the loss of species-poor grassland, tall, ruderal vegetation and scrub. The boundary habitats will be retained. It is recommended for the hedgerows and woodland edge be protected during the construction period and future use of the site with measures including Root Protection Areas and a sensitive lighting scheme, where appropriate. No specific habitat mitigation is considered to be necessary. A landscaping scheme has been designed which includes native grassland and shrub planting. This will adequately mitigate for the loss of the habitats.

PROTECTED SPECIES

Badger

- 4.4 No Badger sett was located on site or on the boundaries of the site. Evidence of Badger and other mammal activity was found on site. A single Badger latrine was found as well as mammal tracks. The site is considered to be used by Badgers for foraging. Due to the lack of Badger setts present within 30 metres of the site, Badger is not considered to be a constraint on the development at this time.

Bats

- 4.5 No buildings exist on site. No trees with bat roosting potential were found on site. No further bat survey work is considered necessary and bats are not considered to be a constraint on development at this time. The linear habitats, such as the hedgerows, are to be retained and protected. No potential bat foraging and commuting habitat will be lost.

Great Crested Newt

- 4.6 The proposed development will not involve the loss of any GCN breeding habitat. No ponds exist on site or within 250 metres. The site supports suitable Great Crested Newt terrestrial habitat. However, given the lack of breeding habitat in the locality, it is not reasonably likely that Great Crested Newt occurs on the development site. Great Crested Newt is not considered to be a constraint on development.

Nesting Birds

- 4.7 The site supports suitable nesting habitats for birds within the trees, hedgerows and dense scrub. Nesting birds can be mitigated for by allowing no works to potential nesting habitats to be carried out within the bird nesting season (which is generally March – August) unless a nesting bird survey is undertaken first.

PROTECTED SITES

- 4.8 No statutory or non-statutory protected sites exist on the site or immediately adjacent to the site. The statutory protected sites are all over 1.5km from the proposed development and the non-statutory site lies over 500m away. The habitats in the designated sites are wetlands which do not occur on site. The protected sites are all separated from the proposed development site by adequate buffer zones and habitats, such as roads, rivers and a railway. The SSSI Impact Risk Zone does not list the development type as a concern for designated sites nearby. Because of this, it is not considered that there will be any detrimental impact on the protected sites from the development.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Further Survey

- 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 may be required:

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

Habitat Enhancement

- 5.2 It is recommended that the following measures are taken into account if a landscaping plan is produced for the red line boundary, to increase the biodiversity value of the site:

- Tree and shrub planting – where practical, native tree species should be planted.
- Soft landscaping should include the provision of native and non-native flowering perennial species, to provide a pollen and nectar source for invertebrates.

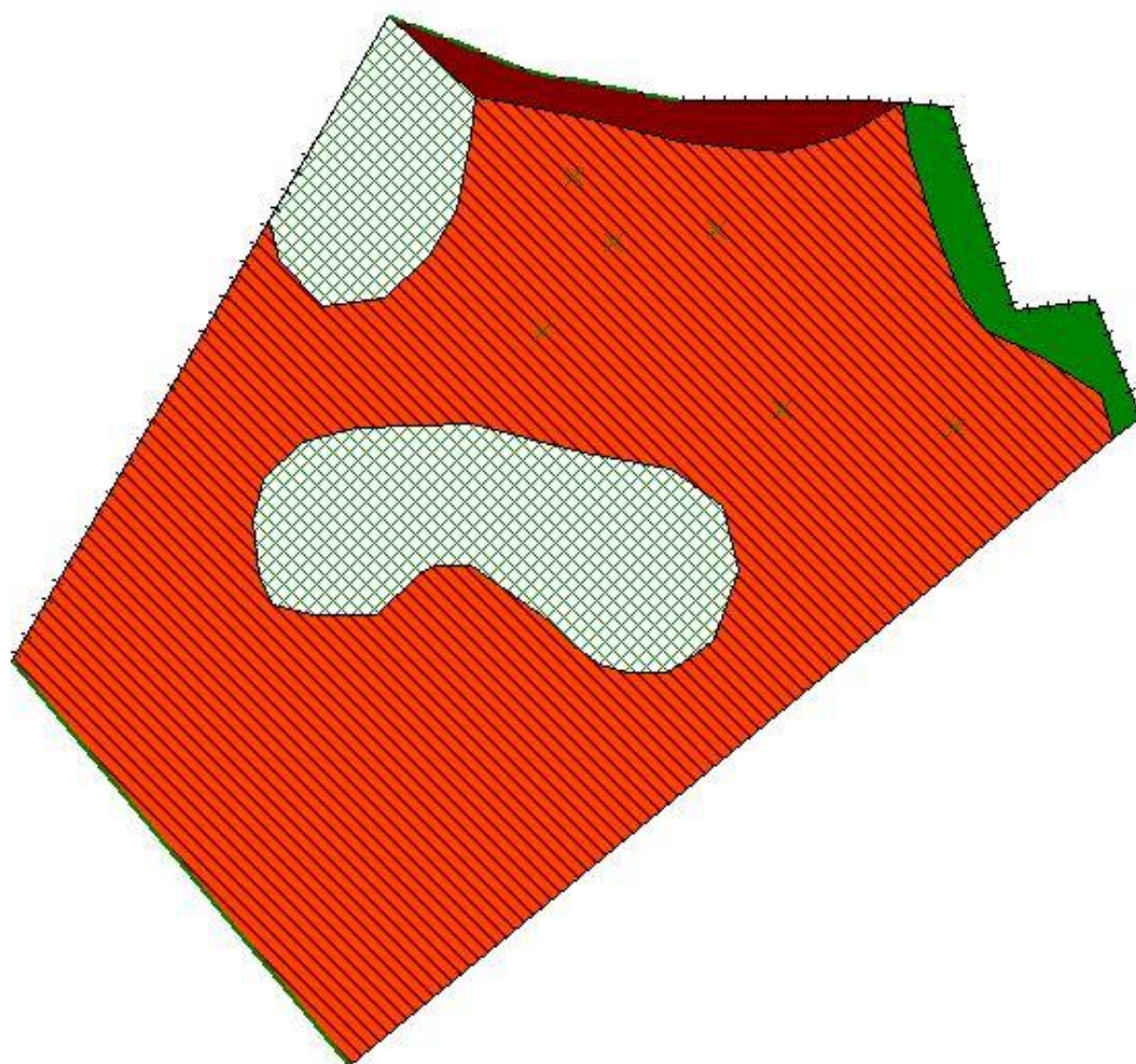
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PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP



Key

-  Bracken
-  Broad-leaved Woodland
-  Continuous Scrub
-  Neutral Grassland / Tall Ruderal Herb Mosaic
-  Defunct hedgerow
-  Fence
-  Intact Hedgerow
-  Scattered Scrub

Phase 1 Habitat Map

Holt Road, Wrexham

NOT TO SCALE

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Drawn by: RF
Date: 18/12/2018



RACHEL HACKING ECOLOGY