

Ecological Walkover Survey

Site Address: **Marford Gate, Chester Road, Marford, Wrexham, LL12 8SF**

Client Name: **A M G DEVELOPMENTS (MARFORD) LTD**

Reference: **Ecological Walkover Survey**

Date: **17th July 2023.**

Background

Arbtech Consulting Limited was instructed by A M G DEVELOPMENTS (MARFORD) LTD to undertake an Ecological Walkover Survey at **Marford Gate, Chester Road, Marford, Wrexham, LL12 8SF** (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The survey was required to inform a planning application for the erection of two new residential dwellings, (hereafter referred to as “the proposed development”). A plan showing the proposed development is provided in Appendix 1.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was completed by Arbtech Consulting Ltd on 14th December 2020 (Arbtech, 2020). Amenity grassland, hedgerows and scattered trees were noted. The site was deemed unsuitable for protected and notable species, however, it was recommended that precautionary working methods should be implemented for badgers, hedgehogs, amphibians and birds.

The aim of the survey was to update the preliminary ecological appraisal carried out in 2020 (Arbtech, 2020), to establish whether any material changes to the habitats on the site and their suitability for protected or notable species have occurred since the original survey.

Site Location and Landscape Context

The site is located at National Grid Reference SJ 35762 55178 and has an area of approximately 0.1ha comprising of modified grassland, scattered trees and hedgerows. It is surrounded by residential dwellings with the river Alyn to the north-west and Marford Quarry North Wales Wildlife Trust site to north. The wider landscape comprises of residential dwellings with pockets of woodland to the south-east, and a nature reserve woodland to the north-west. A site location plan is provided in Appendix 2.

Survey Methodology

The survey was undertaken in dry and sunny conditions with temperatures of 18°C on 20th June 2023 by Sally Hall BSc (Hons), who has a qualification in Wildlife Conservation and Ecology.

A walkover of the site was undertaken to establish whether any material changes to the habitats on the site and their suitability for protected or notable species have occurred since the original survey (Arbtech, 2020) was completed.

Results

For the most part, the site remains the same as previously noted during the original PEA in 2020. However, several new refugia piles have been created in the centre of the site, consisting of trees, branches, leaves and debris. Some soil has been turned along the eastern and northern boundary where various ruderal species have begun to grow. The grass has been unmanaged and therefore the sward height is around 1m in height.

The pond (P1) previously noted in the 2020 report is no longer present, as works have been carried out on the adjacent site since the original 2020 survey, (Arbtech, 2020). P1 was deemed below average suitability for great crested newts through using the habitat suitability index (HSI) due to the presence of duckweed, and P1 was the only pond within 250m, therefore isolating the pond from any possibly breeding populations of great crested newts. Great crested newts were also subsequently concluded unlikely to be present during this survey .

Several birds including blackbirds were observed using the refugia pile to the south of the site, however upon closer inspection, no nests were identified and therefore the birds may have been foraging.

Due to the length of grass and the refugia piles on the site, precautionary working methods should be implemented for badgers, hedgehogs, amphibians, reptiles and birds, as the refugia piles and taller grass could provide shelter for various terrestrial species.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The site is deemed suboptimal for protected or notable species, however, these species could still be present on site by commuting or foraging on site.

The removal of trees and hedgerows should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August. If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the trees and vegetation should be undertaken immediately, by qualified ecologist, prior to the commencement of work. All active nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged.

Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to amphibians, reptiles, badgers and hedgehogs, further surveys are considered to be disproportionate. A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures:

- Site clearance will be undertaken outside of the amphibian, reptile (November to February) and hedgehog (November to March) hibernation season insofar as is possible.
- A toolbox talk will be given to contractors regarding the possible presence of amphibians, reptiles, badgers and hedgehogs at the site.
- A pre-commencement inspection of the site will be undertaken for reptiles, amphibians, badgers and hedgehogs.
- A staged approach will be adopted for vegetation clearance, whereby the vegetation will be trimmed to 15cm and left overnight to allow amphibians and reptiles to disperse. The vegetation can then be cleared to ground level and must be maintained at this level for the duration of construction to deter amphibians and reptiles from the working area.
- Any rubble or refugia piles such as the brash piles located to the south of the site will be dismantled by hand and debris and brash will be stored on pallets or removed from the site to prevent terrestrial species from utilising these areas.
- Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations.
- Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape.
- The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which badgers or hedgehogs could use.
- If any common amphibians or hedgehogs are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance.
- In the unlikely event that a reptile, great crested newt or badger sett is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

Author

Sally Hall, BSc (Hons), Graduate Ecologist.

Reviewer

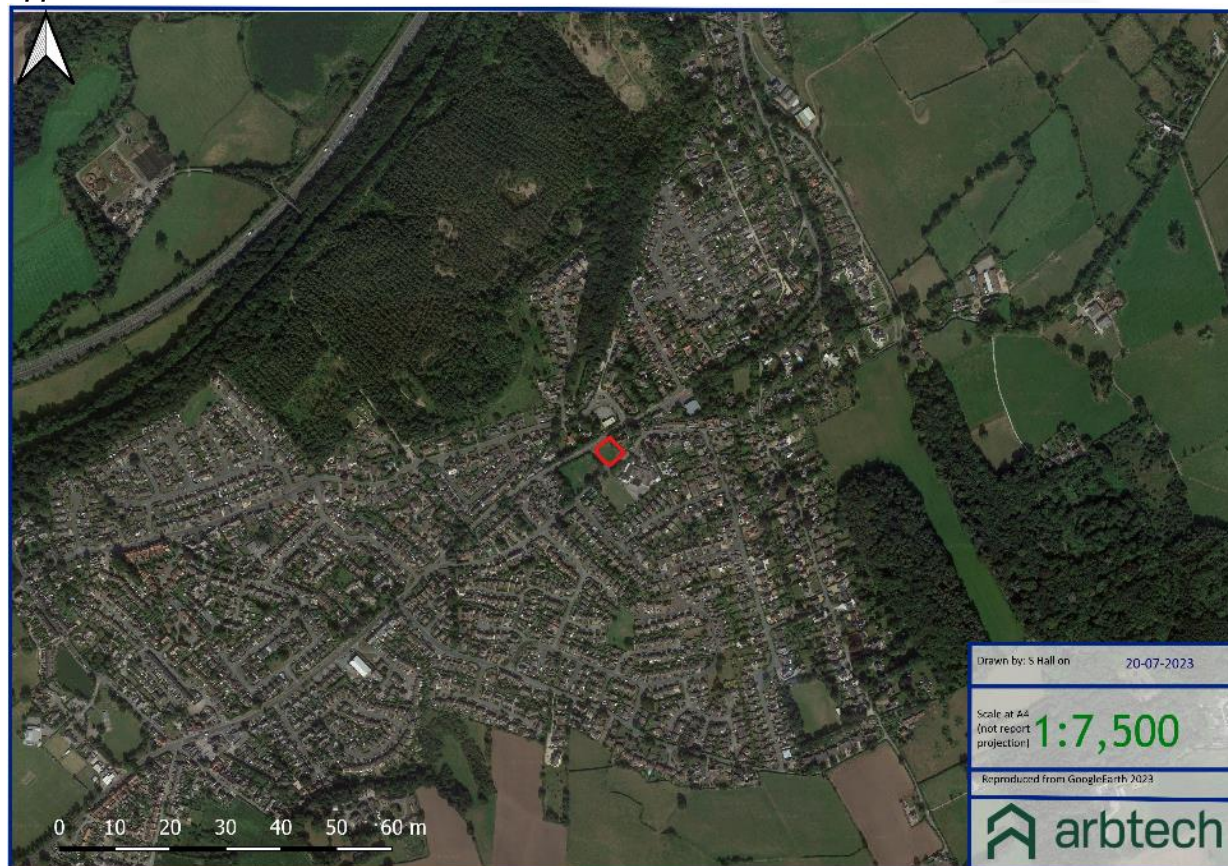
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Appendix 1 – Proposed Development Plan





Appendix 3 – Habitat Map





Photo of grassland and several rubble and refugia piles (pictured above).



Photo of grassland and several rubble and refugia piles (pictured above).



Photo of the taller sward height of the grassland (pictured above).