

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

Site: New Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn, Denbigh Leisure, Clwyd Avenue, Denbigh,
LL16 3HB

Ref: 220286

Client: Wates Construction



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SUMMARY

At land at Denbigh Leisure, off Ystrad Road in Denbigh, planning permission is being sought for the redevelopment of the site.

In March 2022, Indigo Surveys Ltd was instructed to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site. This was undertaken to determine the presence of any important habitats or species which might be impacted on by the proposed development.

Ecological data from Cofnod (via LERN) the ecological database for Denbighshire and north Wales revealed there were no statutory sites no non-statutory sites within 1.5 km of the site.

The desk study also revealed a number of records of European Protected Species, UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) and Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) species within a 1.5 km radius of the site.

No records came from the application site, however there were a number of bat records present within the search radius, including Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, Brown Long-Eared Bat *Plecotus auritus*, and Lesser Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros* amongst others with the nearest bat record (*Pipistrellus spp.*) approximately 500 metres from the site.

Other mammal records included a large number of Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* and a Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*, all of which came from beyond barriers such as roads and houses.

Reptile records were limited to Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis*, with amphibians including Common Frog *Rana temporaria* and Common Toad *Bufo bufo*.

Bird records were numerous and included Redstart, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Dunnock *Prunella modularis*, Starling *Sternus vulgaris*, Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Barn Owl *Tyto alba* and Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* amongst others.

The Phase 1 visit took place on 28th March 2022, in bright, mild conditions.

The site encompassed a large amenity grassland playing field that was enclosed by security fencing, with Ystrad Road running along the eastern boundary, and Clywd Avenue along the western site boundary.

Secondary habitats included a small number of scattered trees, intact hedges, access track (hard standing) and a narrow, culverted stream which was located just outside of the site curtilage to the southwest.

No rare vascular plants were found, and all species recorded were common and widespread.

During the site visit just two species of birds were observed, both of which were Species of Low Conservation Concern (RSPB Green List).

The scattered trees and hedges provided nesting opportunities for birds.

Although it is considered the trees will be retained, since all in-use bird's nests and their contents are protected from damage or destruction, any hedge/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 hedges/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.

One of the marginal trees contained features such as woodpecker holes, fissures and exfoliating bark, that provided potential for bat roosting and/or hibernation and was classified as having low to medium suitability for roosting bats.

As such, if the tree is to be affected by the proposed works, it is recommended a minimum of one emergence survey is undertaken in the period May to September (inclusive).

The site was considered to offer very low value habitat for foraging bats, as the plot was dominated by close mown amenity grassland (i.e. open with poor vegetation/habitat structure).

There were no signs or evidence of Badger *Meles meles* activity, whilst there were no suitable habitats for riparian mammals on the site itself.

No signs or evidence of Otter *Lutra lutra* or Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* were found along the stretch of stream bordering the site, and the stream is thought to remain unaffected by the proposed works. However, should the stream habitats be subject to disturbance or modification, specific surveys for riparian mammals are likely to be required.

With an absence of any standing water or pond habitats, there was negligible potential for breeding amphibians, whilst the terrestrial habitats were poor for amphibians (i.e. close mown grassland and hard standing).

The site offered negligible habitat for common reptiles and it is considered reptiles are likely to be absent.

Care will be taken when carrying out earthworks, 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.

Since the site was dominated by habitats with limited floristic diversity habitats site, 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 land at Denbigh Leisure, off Ystrad Road in Denbigh, planning permission is being sought for the redevelopment of the site.

In March 2022, Indigo Surveys Ltd was instructed to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site. This was undertaken to determine the presence of any important habitats or species which might be impacted on by the proposed development.

Ecological data from Cofnod (via LERN) the ecological database for Denbighshire and north Wales revealed there were no statutory sites no non-statutory sites within 1.5 km of the site.

The desk study also revealed a number of records of European Protected Species, UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) and Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) species within a 1.5 km radius of the site.

1.2 Site description

The site encompassed a large amenity grassland playing field that was enclosed by security fencing, with Ystrad Road running along the eastern boundary, and Clywd Avenue along the western site boundary.

The playing field comprised close mown amenity grassland, with grasses including Perennial Ryegrass *Lolium perenne*, Creeping Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Meadow grasses *Poa spp.*, along with a small number of forbs such as Daisy *Bellis perennis*, White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Dandelion *Taraxacum section vulgare* and Broadleaved Plantain *Plantago major*.

Secondary habitats included a small number of scattered trees, intact hedges, access track (hard standing) and a narrow, culverted stream which was located just outside of the site curtilage to the southwest.

The scattered trees included Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Common Lime *Tilia x europaea*, whilst the sections of hedgerow comprised entirely of Hawthorn.

No rare vascular plants were found, and all species recorded were common and widespread.

The Ordnance Survey Grid Reference is SJ 06110 66074 centred on the middle of the site.

1.3 Proposed works

It is understood that the site is to be redeveloped for new educational buildings.

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 1.5 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;
- COFNOD (LERN)

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 Phase 1 visit took place on 28th March 2022, in mild, bright conditions.

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, all of the habitats could be clearly identified.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Desk study

3.1.1 Designated sites

Ecological data from Cofnod (via LERN) the ecological database for Denbighshire and north Wales revealed there were no statutory sites no non-statutory sites within 1.5 km of the site.

3.1.2 Protected species

The desk study also revealed a number of records of European Protected Species, UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) and Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) species within a 1.5 km radius of the site.

No records came from the application site, however there were a number of bat records present within the search radius, including Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Brown Long-Eared Bat, and Lesser Horseshoe Bat amongst others with the nearest bat record (*Pipistrellus spp.*) approximately 500 metres from the site.

Other mammal records included a large number of Hedgehog and a Brown Hare, all of which came from beyond barriers such as roads and houses.

Reptile records were limited to Slow Worm, with amphibians including Common Frog and Common Toad.

Bird records were numerous and included Redstart, House Sparrow, Dunnock, Starling, Kingfisher, Barn Owl and Tawny Owl amongst others.

3.2 Habitat survey

3.2.1 *Habitat descriptions*

The following habitats were recorded across the site:

- ❑ Scattered trees;
- ❑ Amenity grassland;
- ❑ Running water;
- ❑ Intact hedge;
- ❑ Fence;
- ❑ Hard standings.

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

Scattered trees

(Figs. 1 and 2).



Figs. 1 & 2 Scattered trees

Amenity grassland

The playing field and lawned areas comprised close mown amenity grassland, with grasses including Perennial Ryegrass, Creeping Fescue, Yorkshire Fog and Meadow grasses *Poa spp.*, along with a small number of forbs such as Daisy, White Clover, Dandelion and Broadleaved Plantain (Figs. 3 and 4 - overleaf).



Figs. 3 & 4 Amenity grassland

Running water

A narrow, culverted stream which was located just outside of the site curtilage to the southwest (Figs. 5 and 6).



Figs. 5 & 6 Stream

Intact hedge

Sections of hedgerow around parts of the perimeter comprised entirely of Hawthorn, (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7 Intact hedge

Fence

Sections of fencing enclosed the entire playing field the site (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8 Fence

Hard standing

An access track ran along the eastern perimeter where the site bordered Ystrad Road.

3.2.2 Flora

The botanical composition of each habitat was typical, and all species recorded were common and widespread.

No rare vascular plants were found.

3.3 Protected species survey

3.3.1 *Bats*

One of the marginal trees (Fig. 9) contained features such as woodpecker holes, fissures and exfoliating bark, that provided potential for bat roosting and/or hibernation and was classified as having low to medium suitability for roosting bats.



Fig. 9 - Oak tree with rot hole/cavity

The site was considered to offer very low value habitat for foraging bats, as the plot was dominated by close mown amenity grassland (i.e. open with poor vegetation/habitat structure).

3.3.2 *Badgers*

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

3.3.3 *Otters*

No suitable habitat for Otter *Lutra lutra* was present within the survey area. The stream to the south of the site offered relatively poor habitat and was considered to be too shallow/narrow to support Otters. Indeed no signs or evidence of Otter were observed.

3.3.4 *Water Voles*

No suitable habitat for Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* was present within the survey area. The stream to the south of the site offered relatively poor habitat no signs or evidence of Water Vole were observed.

3.3.5 *Birds*

During the site visit just two species of birds were observed, both of which were Species of Low Conservation Concern (RSPB Green List).

Bird nesting opportunities within the survey area included trees and hedgerows.

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

3.3.6 Reptiles

The site offered negligible habitat for common reptiles (i.e. amenity grassland) and it is considered reptiles are likely to be absent.

3.3.7 Great Crested Newts

With an absence of any standing water or pond habitats, there was negligible potential for breeding amphibians, whilst the terrestrial habitats were poor for amphibians (i.e. amenity grassland).

3.3.8 Invertebrates

Since the site was dominated by habitats with low floristic diversity, it was concluded that there was low 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 be of relatively low value to wildlife, this due to the site being dominated by close mown amenity grassland.

However, the trees and hedges had potential to support nesting and foraging birds.

Additionally, one of the marginal trees contained features such as woodpecker holes, fissures and exfoliating bark, that provided potential for bat roosting and/or hibernation and was classified as having low to medium suitability for roosting bats.

The site was considered to offer very low value habitat for foraging bats, as the plot was dominated by close mown amenity grassland (i.e. open with poor vegetation/habitat structure).

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

No signs or evidence of Otter *Lutra lutra* or Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* were found along the stretch of stream bordering the site, and the stream is thought to remain unaffected by the proposed works. However, should the stream habitats be subject to disturbance or modification, specific surveys for riparian mammals are likely to be required.

With an absence of any standing water or pond habitats, there was negligible potential for breeding amphibians, whilst the terrestrial habitats were poor for amphibians (i.e. amenity grassland).

The site offered negligible habitat for common reptiles (i.e. amenity grassland) and it is considered reptiles are likely to be absent.

Since the site was dominated by habitats with limited floristic diversity habitats across the wider site, it was concluded that there was low 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

The main impact of any development will be the potential loss of some of the semi-natural habitat noted above, in particular the scattered trees, woodland hedges and shrubs that provided nesting habitat for birds.

The proposals are thought unlikely to affect the woodland or the perimeter hedgerows.

However, as all in-use bird's nests and their contents are protected from damage or destruction, any tree or vegetation removal works should be undertaken outside the period 1st

March to 31st August inclusive. If this time frame cannot be avoided a close inspection of vegetation/hedges and trees should be undertaken prior to felling. Work should not be carried out within 5.0 metres of any in-use nest, although this distance could be more depending on the sensitivity of the species.

Any trees not to be removed as part of the proposed works should be given adequate protection during the works, in accordance with British Standard BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations. Protection should be installed on site prior to the commencement of any works on site.

If excavations are to be undertaken, it should be noted that open trenches could potentially trap wildlife, especially if these fill up with water. If trenches cannot be infilled immediately then they should either be covered overnight or escape routes should be provided. 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.

Care will be taken when carrying out earthworks, 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.

4.3 Further surveys

Any tree or vegetation removal works should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August inclusive. If this time frame cannot be avoided a close inspection of vegetation/hedges and trees should be undertaken prior to felling. Work should not be carried out within 5.0 metres of any in-use nest, although this distance could be more depending on the sensitivity of the species.

Should the low-medium suitability tree be affected by the proposed works, it is recommended a minimum of one emergence survey is undertaken in the period May to September (inclusive).

5. REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

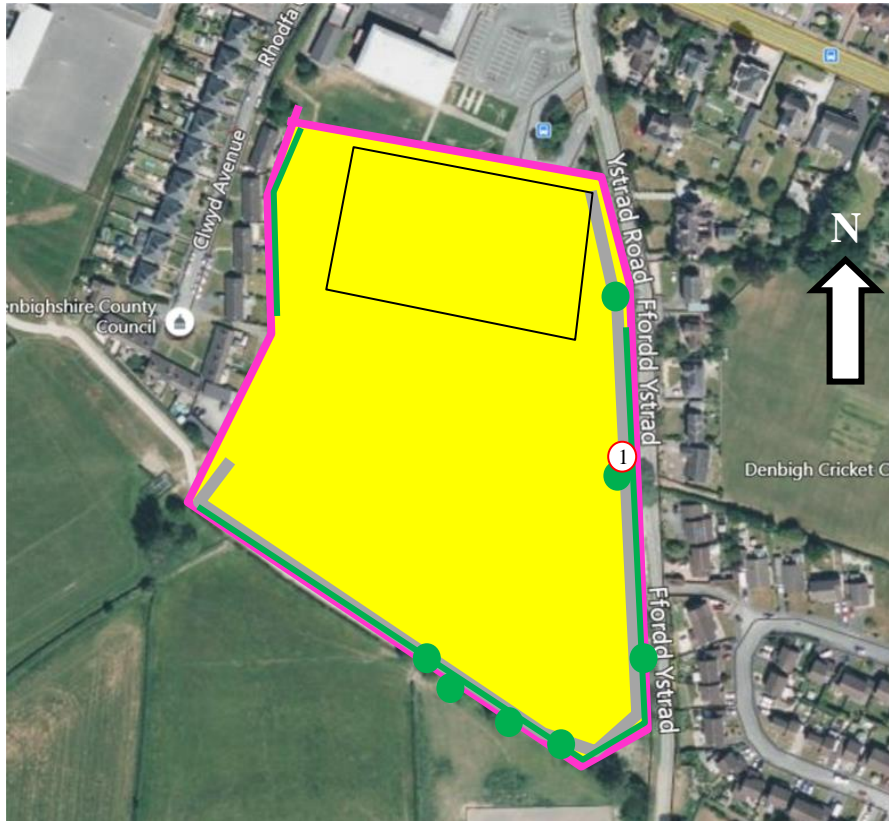
Appendix 1: Phase 1 Habitat Survey Map

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		Intact hedge		Scattered trees
	Hard standing		Running water		Target Note
	Amenity grassland		Fence		

Appendix 2: Target Notes

TN 1: Oak tree with cavity, low -medium suitability for roosting bats.

Appendix 3: Bird species list

Common name	Latin name
Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>

Magpie

Pica pica

Appendix 4: Relevant legislation

4.1 – 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.*

4.2 – 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.