Preliminary Ecological Appraisal for a proposed development on land at Newcastle Emlyn Rugby Club Newcastle Emlyn Ceredigion

Client: Cartrefi Moelfe Homes

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1. Introduction

Wyndrush Wild was contracted to carry out a preliminary ecological appraisal in support of an application to Ceredigion County Council for a new building development.

The proposed development is on land at the rugby club, Newcastle Emlyn. The grid reference is SN31504097 (see figure 1 below).

The aim of the survey is to provide baseline data on habitat and species, both on and adjacent to the site, and to investigate potential impacts that may occur during construction and post-construction stages. An assessment is made of any potential impact on protected species or sites in the area.

Survey Site at Newcastle Emlyn (approximate boundary)

Site Description

The rugby club lies in the floodplain of the Afon Teifi to the east of Newcastle Emlyn. The proposed site is an area of hardstanding and adjoining grassland near the existing clubhouse.

The clubhouse lies to the west, the pitches to the south, agricultural land to the east and a main road to the north. A watercourse flows under the road from the north, but is then culverted under the rugby club and on to the Teifi.

Proposed Development Site

2. Methodology

2.1 Desk Exercise

A limited desk exercise was carried out.

The Afon Teifi SSSI / SAC is in close proximity, approximately 150m to the west. Old Cilgwyn and Cae Heslop SSSI, a parkland site with rare invertebrates associated with old oak trees, lies across the road to the north. There are numerous bat roosts in the surrounding area. Common reptiles are known from the area.

2.2 Extended Phase I Survey

A thorough site inspection was made on 19th March 2025. The survey followed the methodology set out by the Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey (JNCC, 1993) and then subsequently by the Institute of Environmental Assessment (1995). The methods provide quick and accurate classification of habitats.

In addition, the survey looked for field signs of protected species and assessed the habitat for their potential presence. Measures taken included:

- A search for signs of badgers on the site.
- Consideration of the potential impact of the development on bats, hazel dormice and other protected species.
- Recording breeding birds and identifying the suitability of the habitat for nesting birds especially those listed as species of conservation concern.
- Recording a list of plants found on the site, shown in Appendix 1.

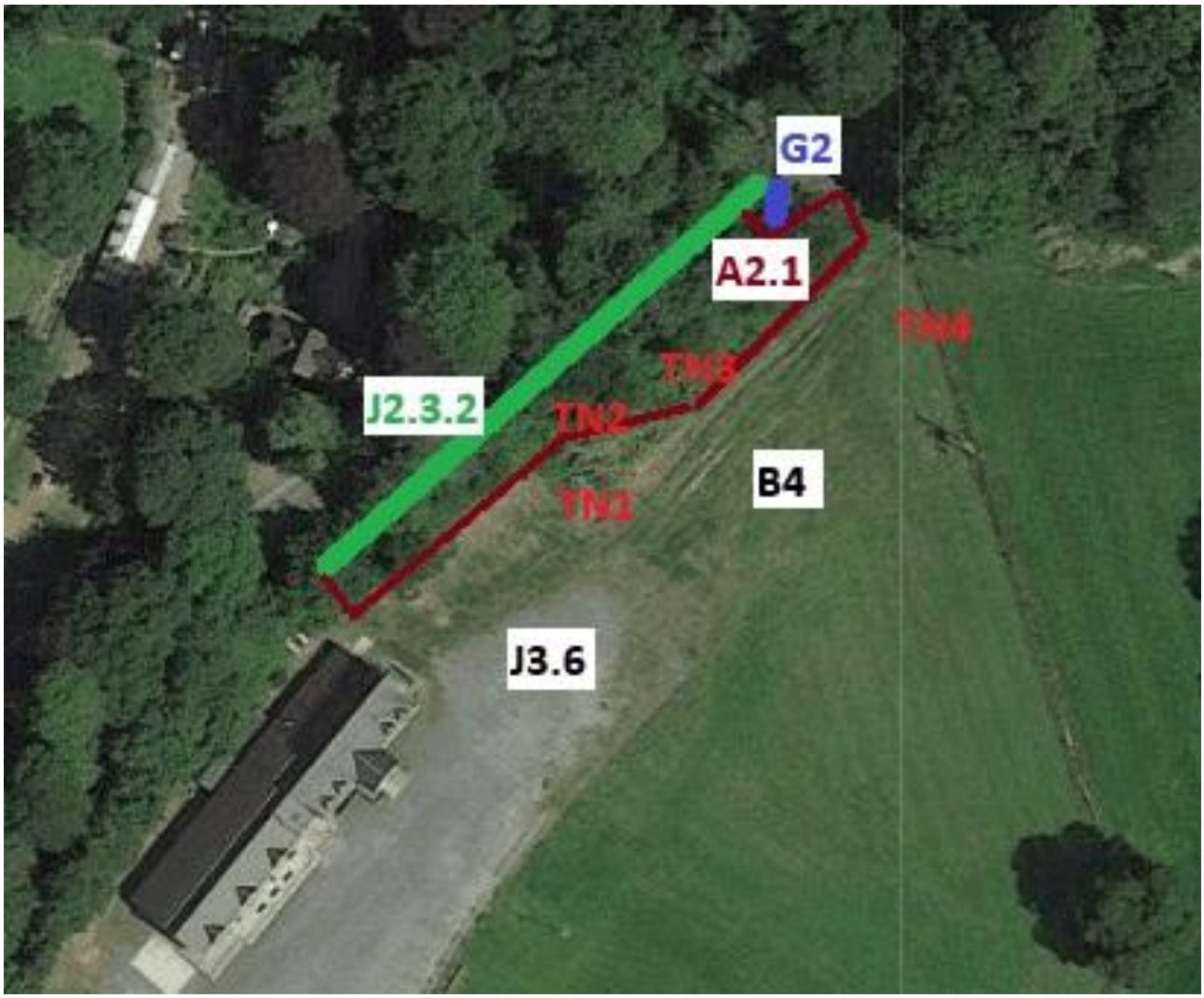
2.3 Constraints

There were no significant constraints to survey. The early spring survey date meant that plants could not be fully recorded, but an assessment of habitat quality could be made from identification of vegetative material. Breeding birds could not be fully recorded, but good weather meant that many birds were singing and an assessment could be made of the likely breeding presence of species of conservation concern.

3. Results

3.1 Vegetation and habitat survey

The habitats at the site location were recorded in detail. The area comprises improved grassland (B4), built ground (J3.6), running water (G2), hedge with trees (J2.3.2) and dense scrub (A2.1).



Phase I habitat map

TN1: Shale and soil piles

TN2: Buddleia

TN3: Japanese Knotweed

TN4: Recently planted row of Silver Birch

Improved Grassland B4

The sward is strongly grass-dominated

The grassland across the field is strongly grass-dominated, with perennial rye-grass dominant, and Yorkshire fog also abundant. Meadow foxtail, creeping bent and a small patch of reed canary-grass were also noted, indicating seasonally damp conditions. Associates are limited to agriculturally-favoured species such as broad-leaved dock and creeping buttercup. Indicators of semi-improved grassland such as lesser knapweed or common bird's-foot trefoil are entirely lacking. The habitat is of no ecological significance.

Built Ground J3.6

The stone hardstanding has common ruderal plants such as annual meadow-grass, lesser trefoil, common mouse-ear and mosses such as *Bryum dichotomum*. One seedling of presumed northern yellow-cress was noted, but this is no longer considered the rarity as it was in Chater (2001). The soil and stone piles in grassland to the edge of the hardstanding again hold common ruderal plants such as common field speedwell. The habitat is of no ecological significance.

Yard edge with stone and soil piles

Hedge with Trees J2.3.2 / Dense Scrub A2.1 / Running Water G2

The roadside hedge has oak, birch, alder and willow with a fringe of bramble

The northern, roadside boundary comprises a thick hedge with trees including oak, silver birch, alder and grey willow. There is some scrub inside this, of bramble and younger birch with some buddleia and Japanese knotweed. A short length of watercourse in the north-east corner, inaccessible behind bramble scrub, appears from a culvert under the road before then

presumably being culverted again under the site. Hedgerows are a Priority Habitat under the Environment Wales Act (2016). The examples here are of some minor or local ecological interest.

3.2 Protected Species

No badger setts, runs or foraging signs were found on the site. The proposed development would not affect badgers.

The site is of low suitability for amphibian species. There are no water features on the site which would attract amphibians, and no significant potential hibernacula features.

The site has negligible potential for reptiles; there could conceivably be common lizards in association with the yard edges.

The hedge has negligible potential for hazel dormice, and this species has not been recorded from the area. No further survey should be required.

The site is of minor value to nesting birds; the hedge is likely to hold common species. No Birds of Conservation Concern (Stanbury et al, 2021) were seen on site.

3.3 Invasive Non-Native Species

A few buddleia bushes and a patch of Japanese knotweed were noted in the northern boundary scrub. The latter is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981, as amended) and it is illegal to plant or otherwise cause it to grow in the wild.

4. Discussion

4.1 Scheme Details

The development proposal is for a new training barn to complement the existing facilities on site.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 Lighting

To reduce or avoid potential impacts on nocturnal wildlife, any external lighting associated with the scheme should be minimised. Lights should be downward-directed and hooded to avoid excess light-spill, and on time sensors with a short duration.

4.2.2 Invasive Species

Japanese knotweed should be subject to control. Any landscaping associated with the scheme should avoid the use of potentially invasive species listed by Thomas (2010) in addition to known invasives listed on Section 9 of the Environment (Wales) Act (2016).

4.2.3 Protected Sites

The proximity of the Afon Teifi SAC will require consideration through a 'Test for Likely Significant Effect' to be completed by Ceredigion County Council using information supplied by the applicant. Intended pollution prevention measures during construction should be detailed, together with the disposal of foul-water generated during subsequent use.

4.3 Compliance with Environment Act (Wales) 2016 / Net Biodiversity Gain

No impacts on Priority habitats or species under the Environment (Wales) Act are anticipated. Net gain could be achieved by the planting of new native broadleaved species near the development, for example on the southern or eastern boundaries of the club land. A small number of native oaks would be preferable to birch, as they would eventually complement the mature oaks in the field to the east and the SSSI to the north.

5. Summary and Conclusions

The proposed development does not present a risk to priority habitats or species on site. The potential for pollution of the nearby Afon Teifi SSSI / SAC during construction or operation will require consideration.

6. References

Chater (2001) Ceredigion Rare Plant Register. Privately Published.

Handbook for Phase I habitat survey Nature Conservancy Council 1990

Stanbury, A., Eaton, M., Aebischer, N., Balmer, D., Brown, A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D., and Win I. 2021. The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. British Birds 114: 723-747. Available online at https://britishbirds. co.uk/content/status-our-bird-populations.

Appendix 1 Plant species recorded at the site during the walkover visit

Creeping Bent	*Agrostis stolonifera*
Alder	*Alnus glutinosa*
Meadow Foxtail	*Alopecurus pratensis*
Silver Birch	*Betula pendula*
Buddleia	*Buddleia x davidii*
Shepherd's Purse	*Capsella bursa-pastoris*
Hairy Bittercress	*Cardamine hirsuta*
Pendulous Sedge	*Carex pendula*
Common Mouse-ear	*Cerastium fontanum*
Cut-leaved Cranesbill	*Geranium dissectum*
Yorkshire Fog	*Holcus lanatus*
Common Ragwort	*Jacobaea vulgaris*
Toad Rush	*Juncus bufonius*
Soft Rush	*Juncus effusus*
Perennial Rye-grass	*Lolium perenne*
Reed Canary-grass	*Phalaris arundinacea*
Annual Meadow-grass	*Poa annua*
Sessile / Pedunculate Oak	*Quercus petraea / robur*
Creeping Buttercup	*Ranunculus repens*
Japanese Knotweed	*Reynoutria japonica*
a Yellowcress	*Rorippa sp.*
Bramble	*Rubus fruticosus*
Broad-leaved Dock	*Rumex obtusifolius*
Grey Willow	*Salix cinerea*
Dandelion	*Taraxacum officinale*
Lesser Trefoil	*Trifolium dubium*
Scentless Mayweed	*Tripleurospermum inodorum*
Common Field Speedwell	*Veronica persica*