



**Preliminary Ecological Assessment  
for a proposed building development  
on land at  
Heol Goi  
St Clears  
Carmarthenshire**

**Client:** Obsidian Developments

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## 1. Introduction

Wyndrush Wild were contracted to carry out an updated preliminary ecological appraisal in support of an application to Carmarthenshire County Council for a housing development with associated landscaping. The grid reference is SN276159. An earlier survey by Fiona Lanc of Habitat Matters was carried out in June 2021, across a larger site than the current application area. The eastern part of this original site has been granted planning permission for a housing development, the construction of which is now underway.

As the original survey is now over two years old, the aim of the current survey is to provide any necessary updates to data on habitat and species provided by Habitat Matters. An updated assessment is provided with regards to potential impacts on protected species in the area. This report should be read in conjunction with the detailed original ecological assessment. This can still be considered to be valid, as no significant changes to the ecology on site or in the surrounding area have occurred in the last three years.



*Figure 1. Application Area (approximate boundary)*

## Site Description

The proposed site comprises part of a gently sloping field to the south of the A40 on the south-west side of St Clears. The tree-lined edge of the A40 forms the northern boundary; a housing estate lies to the west and a new housing development is underway on the eastern side. A hedge and minor road lie to the south.



*Figure 2. Proposed Development Site*

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Desk Exercise

A desk exercise was carried out by Habitat Matters (Lanc, 2022). This concluded that there are no areas with statutory protection within the site boundary. The northern part of the Taf Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC) are approximately 653m to the south of the site; there is no direct hydrological connectivity to this site. The WWBIC data did not return any local sites of wildlife interest within 2km of the survey area. No new assessment was carried out by the present survey.

## 2.2 Extended Phase I Survey

A thorough site inspection was made on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024. 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 reptiles, hazel dormice, bats and other protected species.
- Recording 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 constraints to the survey.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Vegetation and habitat survey

The habitats at and adjoining the site location were recorded in detail. The application area comprises one main habitat type: improved grassland (B4). A narrow strip along the northern edge of the field is referable to marshy grassland (B5) and poor semi-improved grassland (B6). There are hedges (intact species-poor J2.1.2 and hedge with trees J2.3.2) alongside the site, together with a fence / defunct hedge (J2.2.2).



Figure 3. Phase I habitat map

## Improved Grassland (B4) / Marshy Grassland (B5) / Poor Semi-Improved Neutral Grassland (B6)



*Improved grassland in the southern part of the field*

The grassland across the field is mown each year for silage or hay. Grasses dominate, with perennial rye-grass, creeping bent and Yorkshire fog abundant, and crested dog's-tail, Italian rye-grass, meadow foxtail and sweet vernal grass all at least locally-frequent. Creeping buttercup, curled dock, ribwort plantain and common mouse-ear are amongst the limited range of forbs across the field, indicative of agricultural improvement. A single patch of ox-eye daisy is present, but other indicators of semi-improved neutral grassland such as bird's-foot trefoil are lacking. The sward has been mapped as **improved grassland**, and is of little ecological value.

A narrow strip in the lower, northern part of the field is damper, and the impeded drainage here has produced a sward with some soft-rush and compact rush. A few patches here have indicators of **marshy grassland** including marsh bedstraw, greater bird's-foot trefoil, glaucous sedge and meadowsweet. The drier parts of this strip have **poor semi-improved grassland** with some red fescue, meadow vetchling and meadow buttercup. These small areas are of only minor ecological value.



*Northern edge of field with (top) marsh bedstraw and (bottom-right) compact rush*

**Hedge with Trees (J2.3.2) / Intact Species-poor Hedge (J2.1.2) / Defunct Species-poor Hedge (J2.2.2)**



*An unmanaged hedge of grey willow and hawthorn forms the northern boundary*

There is a hedge with trees on the northern side of the application area, screening the site against the A40. This is mostly grey willow and hawthorn, with a single dogwood and young oak. The base of the hedge is thick with bramble, and there is some great willowherb, reed canary grass and cow parsley at the base of this.

The southern boundary against the minor road is a managed hedge of grey willow and blackthorn with a single young wild cherry. This becomes a wooden fence with sparse bramble towards the entrance gate; some ornamental shrubs have been planted on the roadside to the west of this. The wide verge is partly disturbed but has patches of poor semi-improved grassland with cat's-ear, self-heal, germander speedwell, meadow vetchling and a single nest of yellow meadow ant.

Hedgerows are a priority habitat. The examples here are of no more than minor, local significance.



*(top) Roadside hedge; (bottom-left) wide verge with poor semi-improved grassland; (bottom-right) fence with ornamental shrub planting*

### **3.2 Protected species**

No badger setts, latrines or signs of foraging were found on the site. The development is unlikely to affect badgers.

There is no suitable habitat for otters or water voles.

As described by Lanc (2022), the site is generally unsuitable for reptiles and amphibians. No further survey should be required.

The roadside hedge is low and regularly trimmed. It is poorly connected into the wider landscape, running between the roads and buildings of St Clears and a small housing estate with fences and walls to the west. It is not considered suitable habitat for hazel dormouse and no evidence of this species was found.

Hedgehogs have been recorded within 500m of the site and there is anecdotal knowledge of hedgehogs within back gardens in Lower St Clears. The site itself is not currently considered to be good hedgehog habitat but as it develops to provide areas of new habitat, including gardens, it may become more attractive.

The grassland is of little or no value to nesting birds, and no birds of conservation concern are likely to nest here. The hedges and scrub fringes provide some potential nesting habitat, but are unlikely to support species of significant conservation concern; none were seen.

No bat survey was carried out. There is no potential for roosting bats on the site – the hedgerow trees are not mature enough to have developed significant potential roost features, and there are no buildings on site. The field is unlikely to be of significance to foraging bats, but the hedges may be used as commuting corridor features.

### **3.3 Invasive Species**

No invasive non-native plant species are present.

## **4. Discussion**

### **4.1 Scheme Details**

The development proposal is for a new housing development to extend that currently being built to the east. Access would be through this. An attenuation basin is proposed on the northern edge of the site to manage surface water discharges. There would be a mains water connection subject to Welsh Water approval and confirmation of sufficient capacity within the sewerage network to accommodate the development flows. A screening brick wall would be built on the western boundary.

## 4.2 Recommendations

### 4.2.1 Invasive Species

Soft landscaping should avoid using any invasive or potentially invasive species – native species should be preferred. Species included on lists provided by [Thomas \(2010\)](#) should be avoided in addition to those on the Schedule 9 list of invasive species (listed in Appendix 2).

### 4.2.2 Lighting

As described by Habitat Matters, to minimise potential impacts on commuting bats or other nocturnal wildlife, a lighting plan should be included to ensure that any site-lighting (eg: security lights) is pointing into the site and is hooded to prevent unnecessary light spill into the adjacent field boundaries. Once the development is complete, lights should be well-shielded and directed into the site only. In particular, a dark corridor should be maintained along the northern hedgerow boundary.

## 4.3 Promotion of Biodiversity at the Site

Carmarthenshire County Council requires that biodiversity enhancements are included in all developments to meet the Authority's Duty of Care under Section 6 of the Environment Act 2016. Planning Policy Wales (PPW) 10 sets out that *"planning authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. This means that development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity"*.

Some biodiversity features could be incorporated in the landscaping associated with the development. Some or all of the following recommendations based on those given by Lanc (2021) could be incorporated into scheme drawings:

- New habitats will be created through planting small areas of native tree and shrub species within the site and, over time, gardens will develop.
- Native tree and shrub planting could be carried out along the southern boundary of the site to provide new woodland habitat, improved wildlife linkages and enhance / protect the existing boundary hedge.
- Pollinator-friendly plants could be included in the landscape planting for insects and bee bricks will be included on each property, built into a sheltered south or west facing wall. The western screening brick wall would be ideal for this.
- Hedgehog gateways should be included in all fences between gardens
- Integrated bat boxes should be included on houses
- Bird nesting features should be provided on each property, e.g. artificial house martin nests or swift bricks
- The proposed attenuation basin should be designed with wildlife in mind, with exposed natural clay where possible and a maintenance regime which avoids summer mowing

of surrounding edges. The marshy grassland flora developing in this area should be encouraged to redevelop along shallow edges, with supplementary planting of native species such as ragged robin and yellow flag iris.

## 5. Summary and Conclusions

The proposed development does not present a significant risk to habitats on or adjoining the site, and no priority habitats or protected species are affected.

## 6. References

Nature Conservancy Council (1990) Handbook for Phase I habitat survey

Lanc, F. (2022) *Preliminary Ecological Assessment for land adjacent to Brynheulog, St Clears*. Habitat Matters report.

### Appendix 1 Plant species recorded at the site during the walkover visit 23/5/2024

Creeping Bent	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>
Marsh Foxtail	<i>Alopecurus geniculatus</i>
Meadow Foxtail	<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>
Sweet Vernal Grass	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>
Cow Parsley	<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>
Soft Brome	<i>Bromus hordeaceus</i>
Large-flowered Bindweed	<i>Calystegia sylvatica</i>
Cuckoo Flower	<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>
Glaucous Sedge	<i>Carex flacca</i>
Hairy Sedge	<i>Carex hirta</i>
Oval Sedge	<i>Carex leporina</i>
Pendulous Sedge	<i>Carex pendula</i>
Common Mouse-ear	<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Crested Dog's-tail	<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>
Red Fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i>
Meadowsweet	<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>
Marsh Bedstraw	<i>Galium palustre</i>
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>
Yorkshire Fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>
Cat's-ear	<i>Hypochoeris radicata</i>
Compact Rush	<i>Juncus conglomeratus</i>
Soft Rush	<i>Juncus effusus</i>

Meadow Vetchling	<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>
Ox-eye Daisy	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>
Italian Rye-grass	<i>Lolium multiflorum</i>
Perennial Rye-grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>
Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil	<i>Lotus pedunculatus</i>
Changing Forget-me-not	<i>Myosotis ramosissima</i>
Reed Canary-grass	<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>
Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Smooth Meadow-grass	<i>Poa pratensis</i>
Silverweed	<i>Potentilla anserina</i>
Self-heal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>
Wild Cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Oak	<i>Quercus pedunculatus / robur</i>
Meadow Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>
Creeping Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Common Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>
Curled Dock	<i>Rumex crispus</i>
Grey Willow	<i>Salix cinerea</i>
Lesser Trefoil	<i>Trifolium dubium</i>
Red Clover	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>
Germander Speedwell	<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>
Common Vetch	<i>Vicia sativa</i>

## Appendix 2 Plants listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981

Alexanders, Perfoliate	<i>Smyrniium perfoliatum</i>
Archangel, Variegated Yellow	<i>Lamiaeum galeobdolon subsp. argentatum</i>
Azalea, Yellow	<i>Rhododendron luteum</i>
Balsam, Himalayan	<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>
Cotoneaster	<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>
Cotoneaster, Entire-leaved	<i>Cotoneaster integrifolius</i>
Cotoneaster, Himalayan	<i>Cotoneaster simonsii</i>
Cotoneaster, Hollyberry	<i>Cotoneaster bullatus</i>
Cotoneaster, Small-leaved	<i>Cotoneaster microphyllus</i>
Creeper, False Virginia	<i>Parthenocissus inserta</i>
Creeper, Virginia	<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>
Dewplant, Purple	<i>Disphyma crassifolium</i>
Fanwort	<i>Cabomba caroliniana</i>

Fern, Water	<i>Azolla filiculoides</i>
Fig, Hottentot	<i>Carpobrotus edulis</i>
Garlic, Three-cornered	<i>Allium triquetrum</i>
Hogweed, Giant	<i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i>
Hyacinth, water	<i>Eichhornia crassipes</i>
Knotweed, Giant	<i>Fallopia sachalinensis</i>
Knotweed, Hybrid	<i>Fallopia japonica x Fallopia sachalinensis</i>
Knotweed, Japanese	<i>Fallopia japonica</i>
Knotweed, Japanese	<i>Polygonum cuspidatum</i>
Leek, Few-flowered	<i>Allium paradoxum</i>
Lettuce, water	<i>Pistia stratiotes</i>
Montbretia	<i>Crocasmia x crocosmiiflora</i>
Parrot's-feather	<i>Myriophyllum aquaticum</i>
Pennywort, Floating	<i>Hydrocotyle ranunculoides</i>
Potato, Duck	<i>Sagittaria latifolia</i>
Primrose, Floating Water	<i>Ludwigia peploides</i>
Primrose, Water	<i>Ludwigia grandiflora</i>
Primrose, Water	<i>Ludwigia uruguayensis</i>
Rhododendron	<i>Rhododendron ponticum, and ponticum x maximum</i>
Rhubarb, Giant	<i>Gunnera tinctoria</i>
Rose, Japanese	<i>Rosa rugosa</i>
Salvinia, Giant	<i>Salvinia molesta</i>