

**Site Name: Land West of Heol Y Gors, Cwmgors**

**Report Reference: WWE24214 PEA – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal**

Date: 18/12/2024

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## **Introduction**

Land West of Heol Y Gors, Cwmgors (SN 70337 10601) is subject to a full planning application for the redevelopment of the site from a former factory into 45 affordable dwellings. An initial Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken by Acer Ecology in July 2024. A subsequent site walkover was undertaken by Ian Weller ACIEEM Consultant Ecologist and Beth Lewis QCIEEM Consultant Ecologist of Wildwood Ecology on 26/11/2024, following the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017) guidelines and using UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 codes (UK Hab, 2023). This report should be read in conjunction with the Acer Ecology PEA report dated August 2024.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update of the conditions on the site to support the planning application to confirm surveys already commissioned and update on new recommendations.

## **Survey methods**

### *Site walkover*

A field survey was undertaken on 26/11/2024.

All habitats present within the site with the suitability to support rare, protected, or otherwise notable species of flora or fauna were noted, as well as incidental observations of species.

The extended Phase 1 Habitat Plan produced by Acer Ecology still stands, but Figure 1 to demonstrate areas of clearance supplements this map.

## **Desk study**

The data informing this report was collected from field survey and desk study by Acer Ecology and incorporated into their PEA report dated August 2024. Desk study data was collected from the following sources:

- Local Records Centre; and
- Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC).

### *Designated sites*

Results from the desk study data provided in the Acer Ecology report showed that there was one designated site within 2km and four non-designated sites within 1km of the site:

- Tairgwaith SSSI;
- NPT Watercourses SINC;
- Abernat Road Playing Field SINC;
- Derwydd Avenue SINC; and

- Tiroedd Comin Cwm Amman Uchaf SINC.

#### *Priority habitats*

One parcel of purple moor grass and rush pasture priority habitat adjacent to site (54m west). However, this was sufficiently separated that no impacts on this priority habitat are anticipated.

There was ancient woodland within the vicinity of the site (382m west).

#### *Priority and protected species*

Priority and protected species records were returned from the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) for species located within 1km of the site include the following:

- 23 priority invertebrate species were recorded within 1km of the site.
- a total of three records of bat roosts within 1km of the site all of which were for pipistrelle bats dating back to 2012. Common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle were also recorded commuting and foraging.
- 31 priority bird species within 1km of the site.
- 15 records of reptiles within 1km of the site.
- there were no published records of dormice from 1km of the site.
- there were no published records of otter from 1km of the site.
- there were no published records of water vole from 1km of the site.
- there were no published records of badger from 1km of the site.

#### **Field survey**

**Table 1 - Field survey timings and conditions**

Date	Weather conditions			
	Temp [°C]	Cloud cover [Oktas]	Wind speed [Beaufort scale]	Rain
26/11/2024	10	8/8	1	Light drizzle

#### **Field survey limitations**

The site visit was undertaken in November which restricted identification of plant species that would be present in the spring/summer months. A full list of species identified onsite was produced for the Acer Ecology PEA report dated August 2024 in the optimum survey season.

No other limitations were encountered, or assumptions made during the field survey, and it is considered that with the access gained and recording undertaken, an accurate assessment of the site's ecological importance has been made for the time of the survey.

#### **Habitats**

A full description of the habitats observed onsite in July 2024 is provided in the Acer Ecology report dated August 2024.

The site walkover in November highlighted that some vegetation clearance works have been undertaken since the production of the Acer Ecology report (as shown in Figure 14). The key findings were that the unimproved neutral grassland that covered the majority of the southern part of the site, a number of small young trees and scrub along the eastern treeline has been cleared.

#### **Invasive species**

There is evidence that a treatment process for the onsite Japanese Knotweed has begun.

## Buildings

The onsite buildings were assessed in comparison with the findings of the Acer PEA report. It was concluded that the buildings had not changed and the description of them is agreed. During the site walkover bat droppings were found in the extension of B1.



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**Figure 1 - Building identification**

## **Impacts**

The impacts of the clearance works undertaken are as follows:

- Removal of grassland that has been identified as suitable for supporting reptiles may have caused injury/killing of reptiles if present onsite.
- Removal of scrub and trees – may have had an impact on dormouse through destruction of habitat, fragmentation of habitat and potential killing/injury if present onsite.

## **Recommendations**

Recommendations within the ACER PEA report are to be followed unless the alternate recommendations below are approved. It should also be noted that further recommendations may be made as a result of any additional surveys required.

### *Habitats*

In order to prevent any further triggering of legislation related to protected species or habitats, no further clearance works are to be undertaken on the site to allow the neutral grassland species and woodland scrub to re-establish. No log or rubble piles are to be removed from site until March at the earliest as these are now potential hibernacula for reptiles and hedgehogs which may now be hibernating. Any removal of the hibernaculum should be done in the active season, (late March to October, inclusive) under supervision of an ecologist under a Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS) and by hand not machinery.

### *Bats*

**Building B1** was assessed as being low suitability for summer roosting bats and the potential for winter hibernation. The following recommendations, to be agreed with the county ecologist differ from the recommendations in the Acer PEA report. Due to the size of the building and the unrealistic approach of using circa 10 surveyors around the building the following is proposed:

- Heras fencing is erected around building B1 to secure the property, after which, during the months of January and February, static monitors are left onsite for ten consecutive nights where there is access to the cavities within the structure of the building. See Figures 10/11.
- During the winter months the PRF's on the gable ends of B1 are checked by a licenced ecologist using an endoscope from a Mobile Elevated Platform (MEWP) (Figure 9). The cleared PRF's will be filled with hessian cloth to prevent any further use of these features by bats for roosting and reducing the survey effort.
- As the building has many large openings (Figure 6/8) that bats could use to enter/exit, it is proposed that a dawn walking survey around the building is undertaken during active bat season (May to August inclusive), which will provide an early detection of bats and an easier opportunity to witness bats entering the building as opposed to a swift exit.

**B1 extension and B2** assessed as moderate with bat droppings found in the extension. Here, two dusk surveys with two surveyors on each building are recommended during May to August, inclusive, spaced at least three weeks apart in suitable weather conditions. The bat droppings should be sent for analysis to determine the species and aid with any potential licence application.

### *Foraging and commuting bats*

The proposed dawn survey will provide an indication of bats using the site backed up by any observation from the surveys on the B1 extension and B2.

### *Hazel dormouse*

The retained habitat onsite is not suitable for deploying 50 nest tubes in order to meet the criteria within the dormouse conservation handbook (Figure 5). Therefore, it is proposed that as many nest tubes are deployed as

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possible supplemented by ten nest boxes positioned in onsite hazel trees. The tubes and nest boxes are to be deployed in February with the dormouse survey being undertaken each month between March and November.

#### *Nesting birds*

Site clearance works will commence outside of the bird nesting season or, if work has to be carried out during the nesting season (generally from 1<sup>st</sup> March until 31<sup>st</sup> August, although birds are known to nest outside of these dates in suitable conditions), a nesting bird check will be required and must be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist. Active nests should be protected by a suitable buffer, as instructed by the ecologist, until the young have fledged, as confirmed by the ecologist. Where a Schedule 1 species (as defined in the Wildlife and Countryside Act) is confirmed to be present, compensation for impacts, e.g., loss of nesting sites, should be devised and implemented.

#### *Reptiles*

A presence/absence survey of the boundaries of the site will be undertaken, consisting of seven visits, spaced at least two days apart, between April and September in suitable weather conditions.

### **Confirmation of surveys commissioned**

The following surveys have been commissioned by the client with Wildwood Ecology. These are based on the recommendation in the Acer Ecology PEA and are subject to additional requirements or changes as approved by the LPA ecologist:

- X2 winter hibernation checks;
  - X1 bat emergence survey of B1;
  - X2 bat emergence survey of B1 extension and B2;
  - 50 dormouse nest tube survey;
  - reptile presence/absence survey;
  - Ecological Impact Assessment report.
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## Survey images



**Figure 2 – Grassland at the southern end of the site**



**Figure 3 – Log pile of fresh arisings**



**Figure 4 – Evidence of Japanese Knotweed treatment programme**



**Figure 5 – Eastern boundary**



**Figure 6 – Internal view of B1**



**Figure 7 – Eastern gable ends of building B1**





**Figure 8 - Southern end of building B1**



**Figure 9 - Missing brickwork mortar on B1 eastern gable walls**



**Figure 10 - Hole in the wall in B1 exposing cavity for winter hibernation**



**Figure 11 - Hole in the wall in B1 exposing cavity for winter hibernation**



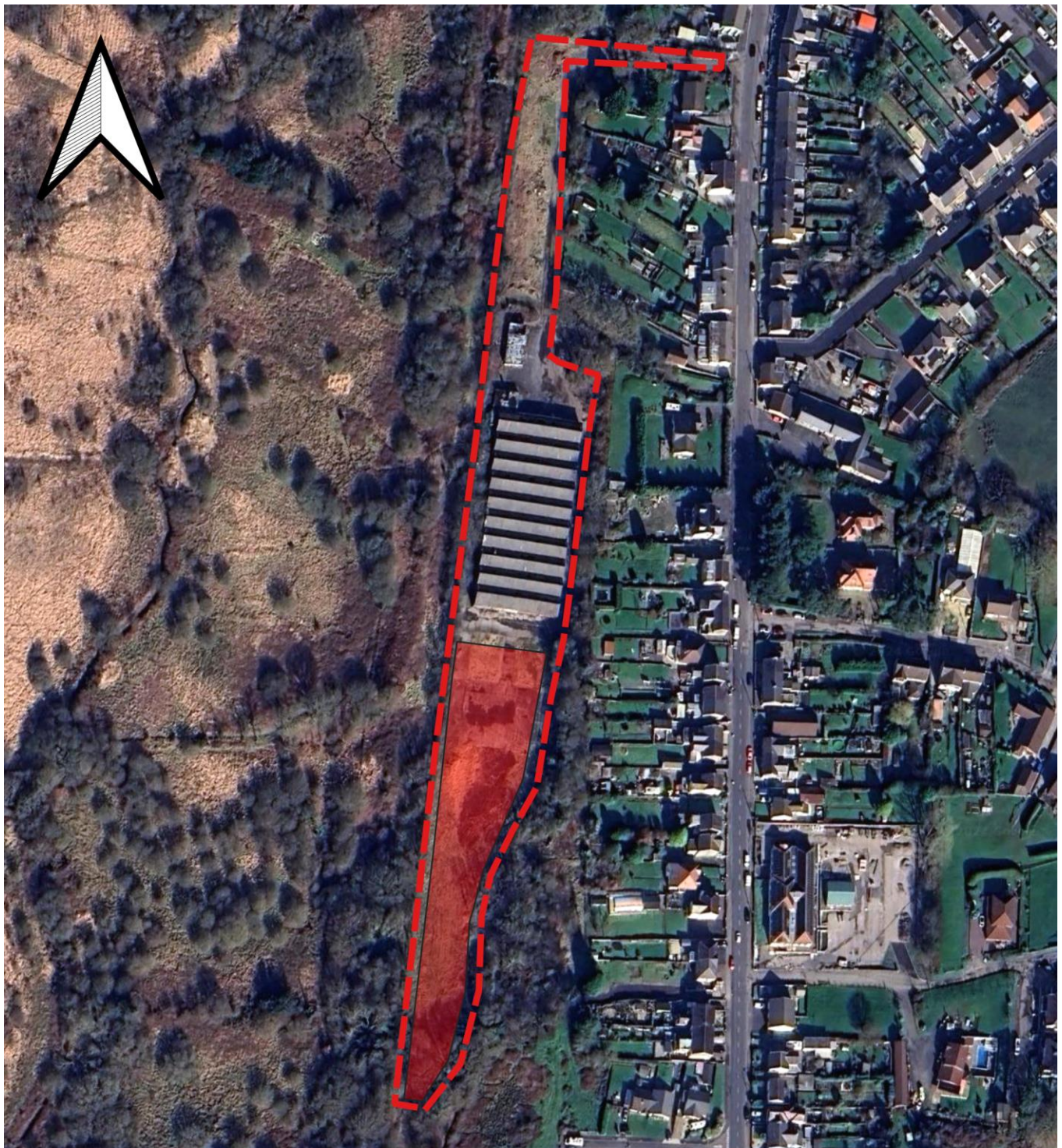
**Figure 12 - Building B2**



**Figure 13 - Bat droppings found in B1 extension**



## Area of clearance



Key

- Areas of clearance
- Site boundary

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**Figure 14 - Area of clearance**