



Land at Gorwel, Llanfairfechan
Interim Ecology Update- 17th May 2023

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Introduction

This Interim Ecology Update provides a summary of initial findings of ongoing ecology surveys currently being undertaken at the Gorwel Site. The report goes on to provide an initial consideration of the proposed development's impacts upon biodiversity based upon the latest site layouts. This summary report should be read in conjunction with the initial Ecology Scoping Report produced for the site by Kingdom Ecology in 2022 (Report Reference- KE22/010/02). The previous Ecology Scoping Report provides the findings of a desk study and Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, along with an initial evaluation of habitats and recommendations for ecological mitigation and site enhancement.

This summary report and the ongoing additional ecology surveys have been completed by Richard Roe (BSc, MSc, MIEEM, CEnv). Richard has extensive experience of undertaking protected species and habitat surveys as a professional ecological consultant with over twenty years' experience.

Following the completion of further surveys, a complete Ecological Assessment Report will be produced for the site.

Interim Findings of Further Ecology Surveys

Following the completion of the initial Ecology Scoping Surveys undertaken at the site in 2021, further ecology surveys are currently being undertaken. These include additional reptile surveys, botanical surveys and bat activity surveys with incidental records of breeding bird assemblages noted during site visits.

The 2023 reptile and botanical surveys are well underway with site visits having been completed on 30th March, 7th and 19th April and 3rd May. A further four visits are scheduled to take place in May, June and July. The bat activity surveys are yet to start with the first visit scheduled for the 21st May, with further surveys to be completed through the summer months.

The reptile and botanical surveys have focused on habitats located adjacent to the existing boundary features of the site. These comprise of intact and defunct sections of dry-stone wall plus short sections of hedgerow.



In summary, the reptile surveys have so far recorded no evidence of any reptiles at the site. The initial 2021 Ecology Scoping Survey had identified the site as principally comprising of closely grazed improved grassland habitats which are of very limited value for reptiles. The site was largely considered to support habitats of low quality for reptiles and it was considered unlikely to support any significant numbers of reptiles. Given the preliminary findings of reptile surveys completed so far in 2023, this initial assessment is likely to be accurate.

The initial 2021 Ecology Scoping Survey had identified the boundary features as potentially supporting wildflowers and plants of conservation interest with plants present in March 2021 observed to include plant species usually typical of woodland habitats and old hedgerows (including lords and ladies and lesser celandine). The 2023 surveys have so far not identified any additional plant species of significant biodiversity value. Nevertheless, the boundary features, along with the scattered mature trees and the adjacent ancient woodland are considered to be the features of greatest ecological value at the site.

With regards to bird species, the site has been found to support common farmland bird species with birds principally using the adjacent woodland habitat, sections of hedgerow and scattered mature trees.

In summary, the interim findings of the additional 2023 ecology surveys appear to confirm the evaluations and conclusions of the initial Ecology Scoping Report.

Latest Site Layout and Net Benefits for Biodiversity

The previous Ecology Scoping Report went on to make outline recommendations to be included within the landscaping design of the proposed development. These recommendations have been carried forward to the latest site layout plan.

The proposed plan includes a significant buffer area between the adjacent ancient woodland habitats and any built development. In addition, new woodland/scrub planting is proposed along the eastern edge of the existing ancient woodland block and continuing along the northern boundary of the site. This will provide a significant increase in woodland habitat and will extend corridors of potential wildlife habitat around the site perimeters.

Further corridors of potentially valuable habitat are proposed running through the site including extensive native hedgerow planting and native tree planting. Further areas of potential habitat of wildlife value will be located around the proposed SUDS drainage basin, along the central footpath link, along with the retained Public Right of Way and around the area of Public Open Space at the southern boundary of the site. In addition to tree and hedgerow planting in these locations, these areas of green space offer opportunities for additional wildflower planting.



Wherever possible, the site layout plan has sought to retain mature oak trees within the site interior and along the site boundaries, however the development will require the removal of some sections of hedgerow and mature ash trees. Nevertheless, this loss of habitat will be compensated by the extensive proposed tree and hedgerow planting.

As recommended in the previous Ecology Scoping Report, new housing will include provision for roosting bats and breeding house sparrow and swifts; with bat and bird boxes built into the new structures at the site.

Conclusions

Overall, the interim findings of the further ecology surveys completed so far in 2023 indicate that the site does not support any additional protected species or previously unidentified habitats of significant biodiversity value.

Furthermore, the sensitive layout design will seek to retain and enhance key features of conservation importance including the adjacent ancient woodland and scattered mature oak trees. The inclusion of extensive tree, shrub and hedgerow planting will enhance habitat at the site contributing towards an overall Net Benefit for Biodiversity.