

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

To: David Cross
From: Matt Davies (Ecologist)
Ext: 5278
Memo number: 2
Date of previous memo: -
Date: 01/11/2021

SUBJECT: P/21/0366 | Erection of 4 detached dwellings with associated parking | Land Between 26 Gelligaer Road And The Farm Shop Gelligaer Road Trelewis

Pre-Application Enquiry advice was provided in an e-mail dated 21/05/2021. These comments can be seen in italics below:

Aerial image shows the site to consist of an area of rough grassland and trees well linked via treelines to a wooded stream corridor, which in turn provides a strong connection to the wider environment. The southern boundary is adjacent to a sheep-grazed agricultural field. There is a drain issuing onsite; the drain appears to be running north east to south west partially across the site and behind the houses to the south west of the site.

Designated sites within 500m of the application site:

- Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC):
 - Nant Caeach (149m)
 - Llancaiach-Fawr Meadows, Llancaiach (156m)
 - Brooklands Marsh, North of Nelson (396m)
- Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) – x 3 areas.

Priority and protected species within 500m of the application site:

- Birds (including Schedule 1¹ species);
- Invertebrates (including Section 7²);
- Bats (closest roost record for brown long-eared bat, 236m from site);
- Otter;
- Badger;
- Hedgehog;
- Reptiles;
- Amphibians;
- Vascular plants.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site was undertaken by Wildwood Ecology on the 5th January 2021. A brief, letter-style report was submitted as part of the application. NB there are no onsite photographs and a data search has not been included.

The report notes previous work on the site has resulted in the removal of mature trees and other habitat (including scrub and hedgerow).

¹ Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

² Environment (Wales) Act 2016

Requirements prior to determination

1. *A reptile presence or likely absence survey (optimal survey months – April/May and September. NB survey work is possible outside these periods, however, increased survey effort will be required).*
2. *The initial survey was undertaken at a suboptimal time (January) in terms of the onsite vegetation and many species may not have been in evidence. A further evaluation of the onsite habitat is therefore required (this can easily be undertaken alongside the reptile survey visits).*
3. *An Ecological Impact Assessment EclA report must then be submitted. This will include (but not be limited to) the following elements.*
 - *An Aderyn data search from SEWBrEC (Package C 2km).*
 - *Onsite photographs (preferably from the later site visits)*
 - *Reporting of the reptile survey (if reptiles are present, an appropriate Reptile Mitigation Strategy (RMS) will also be required prior to determination. NB the RMS can be included within the EclA report).*
 - *An update to the results of the onsite vegetation survey.*
 - *Consideration of the value of the site to invertebrates in relation to any onsite food plants that may be present and the priority invertebrate species within the local records.*
 - *Dark corridors across the site must be demonstrated for the passage of nocturnal species (e.g., bats). Dark routes to and from any bat boxes will also be needed. Any proposed lighting must conform to the following guidelines:*

<https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>
 - *Consideration within the report for any Section 7 (Environment (Wales) Act 2016) habitats or species that may be impacted by the proposed development.*
 - *There will need to be enhancement in line with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and Welsh Government Circular ‘Securing Biodiversity Enhancements’ sent to Heads of planning in October 2019.*
 - *All enhancement measures included within the letter-style report are appropriate and will be included within the EclA report. All mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures will be marked on all relevant drawings for the proposed scheme. NB the double row hedge along the southern horse-grazed boundary will also have standard trees placed at irregular intervals along its length. All species will be native and of local (if not Welsh) provenance.*

The recommendation for a SuDS scheme (‘... to include native species plantings/sowings such as a swale formed using marsh-loving plant species (including devil’s bit scabious) to add an aesthetically pleasing and functional solution to the drain.’) is wholly appropriate and will go some way to maintaining (with the potential to also enhance) the onsite biodiversity in terms of the small amount of marshy grassland currently present.

All ecological survey work will be completed up front and the overall results will inform the final design of the scheme.

1:

A reptile survey has now been undertaken and a report submitted for consideration:

- Reptile Survey. Land Adjacent to Gelligaer Road, Trelewis. Be Ecological Ltd. Issue 1, VA, dated 24/10/21.

The report is mostly acceptable, apart from some issues (regarding timings) within the RMS (Appendix A) that need a bit of tidying up.

The following ...

*'4. All vegetation and **brash removal will preferentially be undertaken during the winter months i.e. between November and February inclusive.***

5. If this is not possible, all areas to be cleared must be subject of a finger-tip search by an ecologist immediately prior to and during any clearance work; the ecologist should also be present while all post hole excavation (or other ground breaking should it be required) is being undertaken.'

... is at odds with ...

*'13. Where necessary, **potential hibernacula (brash, log piles, stumps, roots etc) will only be cleared during the active season (March-October)** while day time temperatures are consistently over 12°C for a period of at least seven days prior as otherwise reptiles may be killed or injured as a result of inconsistent (low) temperatures (during the day and night) and/or low prey availability. Potential hibernacula will only be dismantled by hand unless the supervising ecologist gives the approval for machine dismantling.'*

NB the info in point 13 is also included in the summary table.

The following sentence is not required in this case:

'NOTE: should it be required, a Natural Resources Wales development licence for European Protected Species is likely to take up to 30 working days to be issued following submission.'

In addition, the strategy deals with removal of above-ground vegetation, but does not mention breaking ground and when this would be acceptable.

2:

A detailed ecological statement setting out the following is required:

- x2 integrated bat boxes
 - x1 on the north eastern gable end of House No.4
 - x1 on the south western gable end of House No.1 ...

<https://www.nhbs.com/habibat-bat-box-plain-for-rendering> (or similar)

- x2 bird boxes on the existing Oak tree (specification required).
- Gaps in boundaries for free passage of hedgehogs
- A demonstration of dark corridors across the site for the passage of nocturnal species (e.g., bats). Dark routes to and from any bat boxes will also be needed. Given my suggestions for the bat boxes above, I would further suggest the dark corridors would be along the north eastern and south western boundaries near Houses 4 and 1 and also along the new hedgerow.

Any proposed lighting must conform to the following guidelines:

<https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

NB all of the above will be marked and specified on all relevant drawings for the proposed scheme.

Drainage Strategy / SuDS scheme:

Landscape Details have been provided within Appendix F of the following document:

- Drainage Strategy for Land off Gelligaer Road, CF46 6DN. Intrado Consulting Engineers. REF: IR20134/DS1. November 2020

Comments:

Planting specification shows mostly ornamental species. New onsite planting will be at least 75% native species of local (if not Welsh) provenance. Amendment required.

There is a proposed native species hedge, with a label specifying that it will include hazel, hawthorn and honeysuckle. The hedge needs to include at least x5 native species. This requires amendment. There needs to be more detail in the specification notes regarding the hedge. The letter-style ecological report recommended a double-hedge. This information will be included.

The wildflower seed mix proposed for under the trees to the south east is welcomed. A further specification for the following seed mix (or similar to reflect a wider diversity of native species within the seed mix) ...

EL1 – FLOWERING LAWN MIXTURE. Mixture EL1 contains slow growing grasses with a selection of wild flowers that respond well to regular short mowing.
<https://wildseed.co.uk/mixtures/view/56>

... would be appropriate for the garden lawn areas.

The Landscape details need to be supplemented with a management and maintenance plan for the 5 years post-establishment.