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**Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
for a proposed building development
at Llanina Caravan Park,
Llanarth,
New Quay,
Ceredigion**

Client: Charles Scarrott

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1. Introduction

Wyndrush Wild was contracted by the client to carry out a preliminary ecological appraisal in support of an application to Ceredigion County Council for a change of use (from touring caravans to static caravans) on an existing caravan site in Llanarth, Ceredigion. The grid reference is centred on SN 4188 5737 (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.



Surveyed Site at Llanarth

Site Description

The proposed site is an existing caravan park on the western side of Llanarth. This is bounded by thick mature hedges and the wooded stream valley of the Euphrates, a small stream which flows north-west to join the sea to the east of New Quay. The caravan park is almost level; there is an adjoining amenity field which slopes gently to the north. A small field to the south-east currently provides further amenity and a small number of pitches.



Figure 2. Part of Proposed Development Site

Methodology

2.1 Desk Exercise

A limited desk exercise was carried out. The Ceredigion Rare Plant Register (Chater, 2001) and Ceredigion Rare Bryophyte Register (Sutton, in prep) hold no records for the site. Protected species including otters and bats are widespread in the area. There is only one protected site within 2km, the Aberarth – Carreg Wylan SSSI (part of Cardigan Bay SAC and West Wales Marine SAC). There is hydrological continuity with the SACs via the Euphrates which bounds the site to the north-east.

2.2 Extended Phase I Survey

A thorough site inspection was made on 27th April 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 bats 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 constraints to the survey.

3. Results

3.1 Vegetation and habitat survey

Habitats at the site location were recorded in detail. The application area comprises four habitat types: caravan site (J3.4), semi-improved neutral grassland (B2.2), marshy grassland (B5) and intact, species-poor hedge (J2.1.2). It is bordered by semi-natural broad-leaved woodland (A1.1.1), hedge with trees (J2.3.2) and running water (G2).

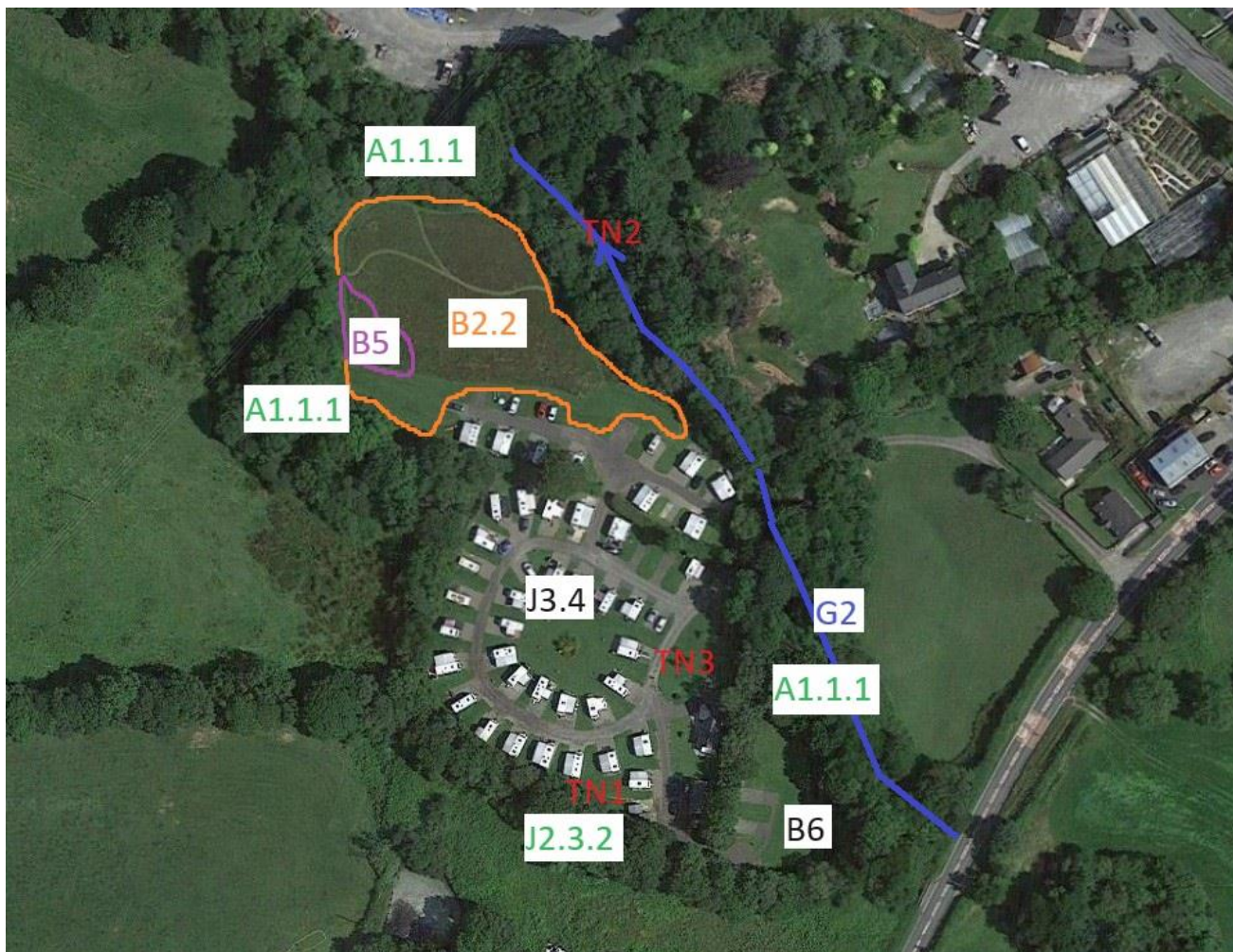


Figure 3. Phase I habitat map

TN1: Himalayan Balsam

TN2: Cherry Laurel

TN3: Montbretia

Caravan Park (J3.4)



Mown grassland and ornamental trees

The main part of the application area is already a formally-managed caravan park, with stone-surfaced pitches, access roads, regularly mown amenity grassland and ornamental trees and shrubs such as birches and weeping willows. The grassland, although repeatedly mown, has a few wildflowers such as self-heal. Occasional plants of lesser knapweed in the south-eastern part of the site suggest this could be classed as poor semi-improved grassland. A few common ruderal plants and mosses, including common whitlow-grass and parsley-piert, were noted in association with the stone-surfaced areas.

The habitat is of no more than minor ecological interest.

Semi-Improved Neutral Grassland B2.2 / Marshy Grassland B5



Semi-improved neutral grassland (top); marshy grassland dominated by soft rush (bottom-left) and with frequent wild angelica (bottom-right)

The field on the northern side of the caravan park comprises semi-improved grassland which is occasionally mown. The sward is dominated by common bent, red fescue and Yorkshire fog, with tall fescue also noted. Ribwort plantain is abundant, and lesser knapweed, creeping cinquefoil and wild angelica generally frequent. A regularly mown area at the top of the field has frequent glaucous sedge, field woodrush, self-heal and cat's ear. There is a small area

of soft rush-dominated marshy grassland in one corner, with greater bird's-foot trefoil, wild angelica and marsh thistle amongst the limited range of associates.

Although lacking signs of agricultural modification, the neutral grassland here is rather species-poor and a thatch of grass-litter (presumably from mowing without removal of arisings) limits the diversity of wildflowers. Indicator species of better-quality grassland, such as common bird's-foot trefoil, are apparently absent and the grassland does not conform to the 'lowland meadows' Priority Habitat under the Environment Wales Act. However, the small area of marshy grassland is Priority Habitat as rush-pasture. The field has the potential to become more diverse with continued annual mowing, particularly if arisings are removed.

Hedge with Trees J2.3.2 / Intact Species-poor Hedge J2.1.2 /

Semi-natural Broad-leaved Woodland A1.1.1



The southern boundary hedge has mature trees including oak

Internal hedges are managed and comprise mixtures of hazel, grey willow, blackthorn and dog rose, with a small amount of oak including one standard tree. The hedge-bottom flora includes typical species such as red campion, herb Robert and hart's-tongue fern as well as primrose and gooseberry. The application area is bounded by thick mature hedgerows and

broad-leaved woodland. Oak and sycamore dominate the hedges, with hazel, aspen and downy birch also noted. Hazel is also a feature of the drier woodland areas, whilst the damper soils closer to the stream are dominated by ash, sycamore and grey willow with a scattering of alders in some places. The ground flora includes bluebells, honeysuckle, enchanter's nightshade and lesser celandine, whilst wetter areas have opposite-leaved golden saxifrage, hemlock water-dropwort and Himalayan balsam.



(left) hazel in streamside woodland; (right) managed hedge on eastern boundary with streamside woodland behind

These areas of unmanaged woodland and mature hedge will be of some local ecological significance for breeding birds, insects, fungi and other wildlife. The managed internal hedges are not notably rich, and do not class as significant hedges according to the Hedgerow Act. However, all hedges are a Priority Habitat under the Environment Wales Act and they are of some ecological value as a result.

Running Water

The water quality in the small stream alongside the site already appears to be poor as it enters it. The channel here has an abundance of hemlock water-dropwort, indicative of high nutrient status, and the pollution-tolerant bryophytes *Platyhypnidium riparioides* and *Chiloscyphus polyanthos*. The wooded clay banks have a typical selection of common mosses and woodland plants.

The habitat here is of minor ecological value.



Stream channel alongside the south-eastern part of the site

3.2 Protected species

Badgers

No badger setts, latrines or signs of foraging were found in the woodland areas. Parts of the mature hedges were difficult to access due to dense growth, and there is a possibility that a sett could be hidden here.

Otters

The stream channel was surveyed, but no signs of otters were found. The woodland lacks dense bramble cover or other features suitable for breeding or laying-up. The development would not affect this species.

Birds

The grassland is of no value to nesting birds, and the woodland and hedges provide the main potential nesting habitat. Territories of several species were apparent here, including several

'Birds of Conservation Concern' – dunnock, mistle thrush, song thrush, goldcrest, wren and house sparrow. Red kite was seen over the site, but no nests were found.

Reptiles and Amphibians

The grassland habitat is of limited suitability to amphibian species. There are no standing water features on the site which would attract amphibians, and no significant potential hibernacula features. There is some potential for the site to be used by dispersing or foraging amphibians.

The semi-improved neutral grassland in the northern field has some low – moderate potential for reptiles such as barred grass snake and common lizard. The main part of the site is too disturbed and frequently mown to provide habitat for reptiles.

Bats

No bat survey was carried out.

The site offers some foraging habitat, particularly in association with the northern field, and the mature hedges and woodland provide potential feeding and commuting corridors. No trees with potential roost features were noted. The caravans and associated buildings on site have no potential for roosts.

Hazel Dormouse

Although the drier hazel woodlands and mature hedges may have some suitability for dormice, there are no records of this species from the surrounding area and impacts on the hedges would be insignificant; no further survey should be required.

3.3 Invasive Species

Himalayan balsam forms a fringe inside the hedge on the southern boundary, and was also noted beside the stream in the south-eastern part of the site. Cherry laurel and an azalea species were noted alongside the stream by the north-eastern site boundary. Montbretia was noted under ornamental birch trees in the main part of the caravan site.

4. Discussion

4.1 Scheme Details

The development proposal is for a change of use from touring caravans to static caravans. The layout of pitches would be altered as a result, and some areas of amenity grassland and a short section of internal hedge would be impacted.

4.2 Recommendations

Semi-improved Neutral Grassland

The area of richer grassland in the northern part of the site should be retained and appropriately managed. Mowing once a year between August and October would ideally see the arisings collected and used/composted.

Breeding Birds

Any required removal of woody vegetation should take place outside of the main bird breeding season (March 1st to August 31st).

Bats

The site has little potential for roosting bats, but could be used by foraging or commuting bats. Bat activity survey may be required if the proposals entail any significant modifications to the hedges or woodland area.

Invasive Species

A control plan for the Himalayan balsam on site would be advisable, but may prove of limited effectiveness without a strategy for the wider catchment area. Any new landscaping associated with the scheme should avoid introduction of invasive or potentially-invasive species; native trees and shrubs should be preferred.

River Euphrates / West Wales Marine SAC

The water quality in the adjoining stream should be protected, and any foul-water treatment system upgraded if required.

4.3 Promotion of Biodiversity at the Site

Ceredigion 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) 12 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*".

Enhanced management of the grassland in the northern field, as described above, would provide one possibility for improving the value of the site for wildlife.

Control of Himalayan balsam would contribute to the management of invasive non-native species in the area.

5. Summary and Conclusions

The site contains semi-improved grassland and marshy grassland, which will be retained as an amenity and conservation area in the undeveloped northern part of the site. The re-design of pitches within the existing caravan park will have no more than minor ecological impacts in what is already a managed area of amenity grasslands and ornamental plantings. Invasive non-native species should be controlled where possible, and landscaping should avoid the introduction of further invasive or potentially invasive species. Watercourses are buffered by existing woodland areas; apparent poor water-quality appears to arise from intensive agricultural use of land upstream. No protected species or sites would be impacted by the proposals.

6. References

Chater, A (2001) *Ceredigion Rare Plant Register*

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

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.

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

Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Common Bent	<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>
Wild Angelica	<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>
Parsley-piert	<i>Aphanes</i> sp.
Hart's-tongue Fern	<i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i>
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>
Cuckoo Flower	<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>
Glaucous Sedge	<i>Carex flacca</i>
Oval Sedge	<i>Carex leporina</i>
Pendulous Sedge	<i>Carex pendula</i>
Lesser Knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>
Common Mouse-ear	<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>
Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage	<i>Chrysosplenium oppositifolium</i>
Enchanter's Nightshade	<i>Circaea lutetiana</i>
Marsh Thistle	<i>Cirsium palustre</i>
Hazel	<i>Coryllus avellana</i>
Montbretia	<i>Crocsmia x crocosmiiflora</i>
Male Fern	<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>
Great Willowherb	<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>
Common Whitlow-grass	<i>Erophila verna</i>
Red Fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i>
Goosegrass	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Herb Robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>
Yorkshire Fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>
Bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>
Cat's-ear	<i>Hypochoeris radicata</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Himalayan Balsam	<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>
Soft Rush	<i>Juncus effusus</i>
Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil	<i>Lotus pedunculatus</i>
Field Woodrush	<i>Luzula campestris</i>
Yellow Pimpernel	<i>Lysimachia nemorum</i>
Creeping Jenny	<i>Lysimachia nummularia</i>
Daffodil	<i>Narcissus pseudonarcissus</i>
Hemlock Water-dropwort	<i>Oenanthe crocata</i>
Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Greater Plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>
Annual Meadow-grass	<i>Poa annua</i>
Rough Meadow-grass	<i>Poa trivialis</i>
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>
Creeping Cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla reptans</i>
Barren Strawberry	<i>Potentilla sterilis</i>
Primrose	<i>Primula vulgaris</i>
Self-heal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>

Cherry Laurel	<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Pedunculate Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Creeping Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
Azalea	<i>Rhododendron</i> sp.
Gooseberry	<i>Ribes uva-crispa</i>
Common Dog-rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Procumbent Pearlwort	<i>Sagina procumbens</i>
Grey Willow	<i>Salix cinerea</i>
Tall Fescue	<i>Schedonorus arundinaceus</i>
Red Campion	<i>Silene dioica</i>
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>
Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>
White Clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>