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14/12/2023

Dear Llyr Morris,

Re: Updated walkover survey – New Forge, Oakdale (grid ref: ST 19259 98712)

Wildwood Ecology was commissioned by Castell Group Ltd to undertake an updated walkover survey on the 15th November 2023. The walkover survey was undertaken to provide an update of onsite conditions. This letter should be read in conjunction with the report (WWE22022 – New Forge, Oakdale, Caerphilly, NP12 0BL).

Walkover survey

Methodology

The walkover survey was undertaken by Jack McCormack (Assistant Consultant Ecologist). The survey involved a complete walkover of the site and assessment of the onsite habitats and building was undertaken to confirm that there have been no changes to the onsite habitats outlined within the phase 1 habitat survey undertaken in 2022. The walkover also was required to confirm that there have been no changes of use of the habitat by local protected species.

Results

The updated results are shown in **bold.**

Habitats

The survey undertaken in April 2022 confirmed that the site consisted of the following habitats: poor semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedgerow, hardstanding, building, and ornamental planting.

The walkover survey identified that the grass habitat at the south of the building had grown since the survey undertaken in April 2022 and was now tussocky in places and was on average 15-30cm in height. In addition, saplings had started growing out of cracks within the concrete hardstanding area at the north of the site (the former carpark). The sapling

species were identified as alder and sycamore and were approximately 2-3m in height, with no potential roosting features for bats due to their young age.

The walkover survey confirmed that there have been no other changes to the onsite habitats identified in the phase 1 habitats survey undertaken in 2022.

Building

Upon arrival to the site, there was evidence of people breaking into the site. This was evident by graffiti, broken windows within the building and a fallen down fence.

The walkover survey confirmed that there have been no other changes to the onsite building identified in the phase 1 habitats survey undertaken in 2022.

Protected species

The 2022 survey identified the site as supporting the following protected species: bats and nesting birds.

The 2023 survey observed no evidence of nesting birds from earlier in the season (old nests') however the site remains suitable to support nesting birds (hedgerow, and building). Bat surveys carried out in 2022 confirmed the building to have a day roost of two common pipistrelles. A bat licence will be required from NRW for the works to legally proceed. This can be applied for once planning has been granted. Although the building remained in the same condition, evidence of people breaking in poses a risk to further damage to the building e.g., via broken windows, which could create additional entrance points for bats to gain access into the building. It was not possible to enter the building due to health and safety reasons.

Conclusions

As the 2023 survey confirmed that there were minimal changes to the site's habitats and use of the site by protected species and assuming there have been no changes to the proposed development, **the mitigation measures outlined within the previous report are considered to still be valid and can be used to support the application. If there are changes to the proposed development, then further survey and recommendations may be required.**

Planning Policy Wales Chapter 6

Planning Policy Wales Chapter 6 has been amended since the original surveys took place. In order to reach a net benefit for biodiversity and incorporate green infrastructure into the design, we suggest the following:

- Bird and bat boxes incorporated into new buildings and boundary features.
- Wildflower planting within communal areas to increase habitat for invertebrates.
- Additional hedgerow planting at the site boundaries and/or enhancement of the onsite hedgerow to the east. The onsite hedgerow is species poor (consists of hazel) and could

be enhanced with additional native species including field maple, hawthorn, holly, blackthorn and elder. Climbing species such as ivy and honeysuckle could also be included.

- Any new planting should use native species.
- A raised bund/bank could be added to the proposals which would provide suitable habitat for basking reptiles and nesting bees.

Yours sincerely,

Maddie Anderson
Assistant Consultant Ecologist
Wildwood Ecology

This letter will remain valid for a period of 18 months from the date of the last survey – i.e. until May 2025. Further surveys may be required to update the site information if planning is not obtained, or works do not commence within that time period.

APPENDIX 1: SURVEY IMAGES

Figure 1 – Grassland at the south of the site, with adjacent building to the right of the image.

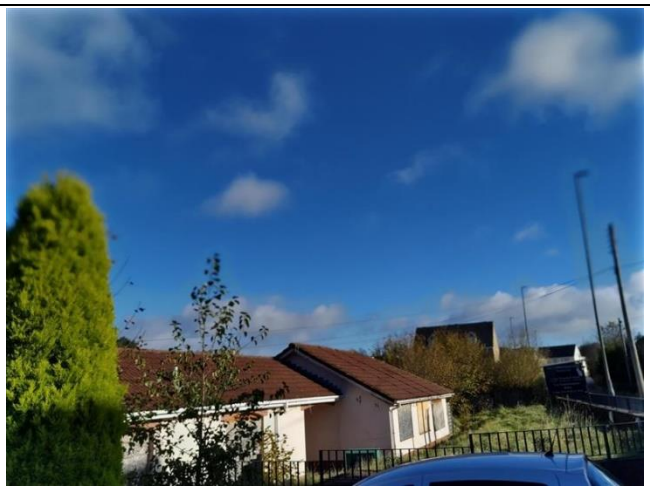

Figure 2 – View of the onsite building, looking east.

Figure 3 – Northeastern corner of the building with growing ivy, and adjacent hazel hedgerow at the east side of the building.

Figure 4 – View of the former entranceway to the building at the south.

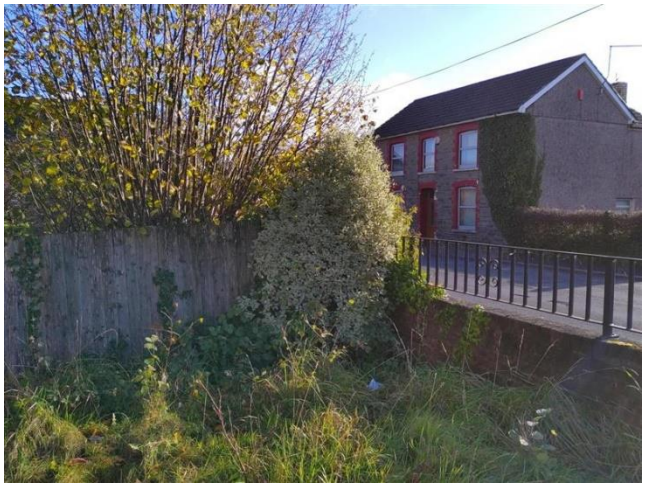

Figure 5 – Vegetation at the southeastern corner of the site, looking out towards adjacent road.

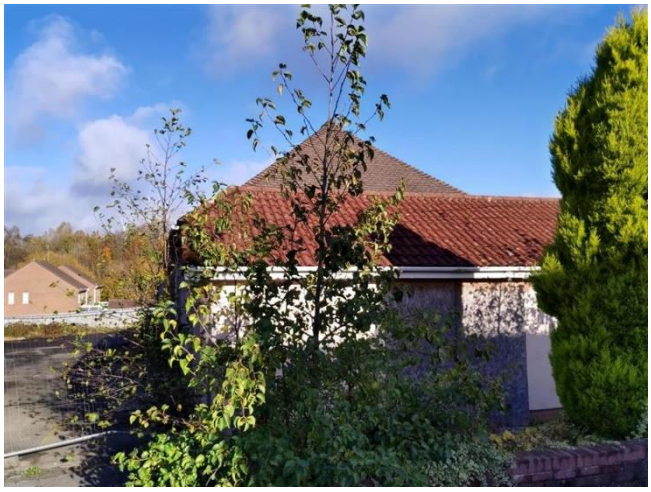

Figure 6 – View of southwestern corner of the building, looking north towards hardstanding area at the back of the building.

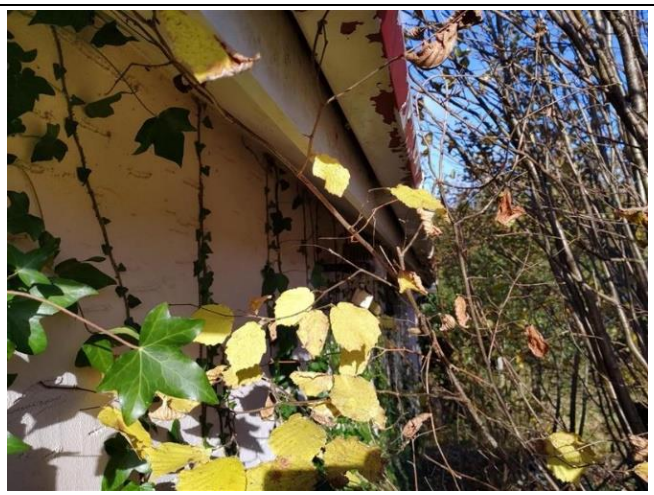

Figure 7 – View of the soffit at the northeastern corner of the site, adjacent to hazel hedgerow at along the eastern site boundary.

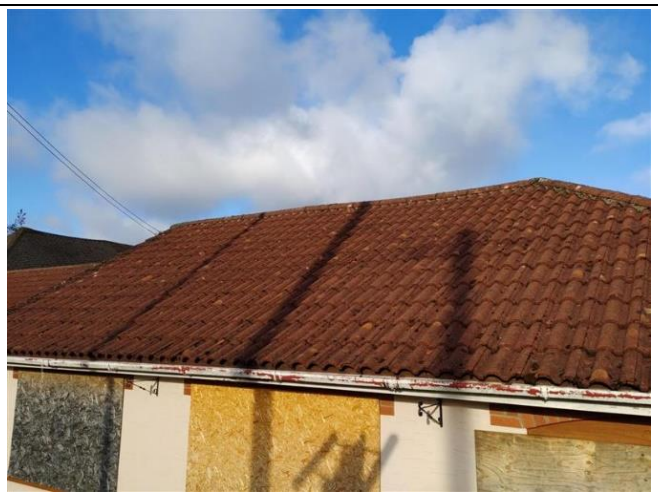

Figure 8 – View of the roof and southern aspect of the building.