

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

Wiggleys Fun Farm

Aberbaiden Road, Ffordd-y-Gyfraith, Cefn
Cribwr, CF32 0BT

Date: 23rd October 2023

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Summary

Wiggleys fun farm is located close to the small settlement of Ffordd y Gyfraith and Bridgend. The area is formerly farmland, with a series of enclosed fields and some elevated field boundaries, with areas of former mineral workings to the western half of the site, now forming areas of conifer plantation (nonancient).

The site has a series of likely planted Beech *Fagus sylvatica* trees characterising the former field boundaries, with areas of planted Sitka Spruce *Picea sitchensis* following a series of overland drainage ditches (seasonal) and wetter areas, likely as a result of former historic mineral extraction.

The proposed extension to the current leisure facility is located upon a brownfield, former car parking site to the west of the current café and indoor play facility. The new build will in effect become a continuous extension of the current building.

The site currently has low ecological value, with any and all likely value being located in adjacent wooded areas to the west. Care should be incorporated into the building design to minimise light pollution levels entering the woodland area which may include protected species, namely presence of Bats, although conditions and suitable day or maternity roost features are extremely limited.

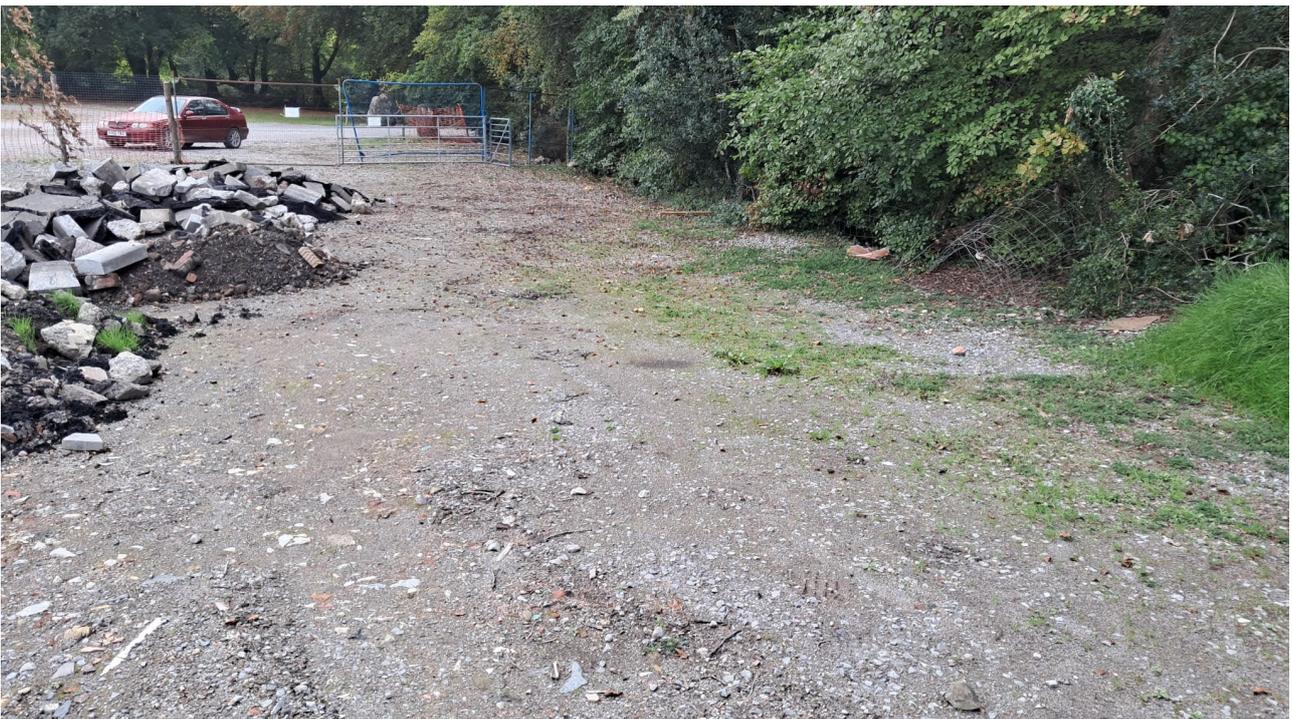


Photo: Current state of former car parking, hard surfaced area.

Site Location & Description of Development Area.

At the time of writing, the area to become additional indoor facility or extension to the current indoor café and play facility is a hard standing, former car parking area as shown in Appendix 1.0 (current ordnance survey maps). The grid reference for this area is: SS 865 844

The land surrounding the proposed development area is shown as coniferous woodland, likely planted as remediation works following areas of historic mineral workings in the adjacent area. To the north are areas of open grassland used currently as part of the fun farm centre and includes areas of short mown grass and play equipment. To the south lies a hard surfaced car parking area, bordered by trees on all sides.



Figure 1: Wiggley's Proposed Extension Location (outlined in red)

LEGISLATION AND POLICY

1.3.1 ENVIRONMENT (WALES) ACT 2016

Under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Environment Act), Bridgend County Borough Council has a statutory duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of its functions. 8 | Page Section 7 (S7) of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 lists habitats and species that the Welsh Government consider are of key significance to sustain and improve biodiversity in Wales.

Scope of the Survey

The survey comprised a walkthrough and undertake a desk based assessment of the proposed development site by a competent person(s) to determine any ecological constraints to the development. The objectives of the survey were to obtain sufficient data to:

- Identify any protected habitat and species present/likely to be present that may pose potential constraints to redevelopment of the site e.g. birds, reptiles, or mammals in and around the surrounding area;
- Assess whether the proposed development would be likely to have an impact upon those species;
- Identify potential bat activity levels and use of buildings on site e.g. roosting within the buildings identified and/or foraging in and around the surrounding area;
- Assess whether the proposed redevelopment of the buildings on site would be likely to have an impact upon those species, if present.
- Recommend a mitigation strategy (where possible) for those habitats/species present that pose a constraint to the redevelopment of the site; and
- Identify any opportunities for enhancement of the ecological value of the site.

The proposed development area is located on current hard standing and/or a brownfield area, formally used as a car parking area and service area for the current buildings located on site.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The site was surveyed on 28th October 2023 by the author and further notes taken during subsequent site visits. All visits were undertaken in dry weather conditions. An extended phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken for the site. The habitat types present on the site were assessed using the habitat classification system as set out in the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey – a technique for environmental audit (JNCC, 2010). Habitats were mapped and classified based largely on vegetation composition, with target notes used to demarcate features of interest. In addition to the habitats, conspicuous fauna, particularly protected species, were also recorded.

SURVEY LIMITATIONS

There were no limitations to this survey as it was undertaken during appropriate weather conditions and at an appropriate time of year.

SURVEY RESULTS

The results of the phase 1 habitat survey are presented on the plan below (Figure 4).

The below sets out descriptions of each habitat type represented on the site. Survey results from Datamap Wales show the located to be outside of areas of existing woodlands and areas of Ancient Woodland as shown on the 2021 Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI).

To the west of the development area is a narrow, seasonal ditch which follows the development area boundary along with a series of mature and semi mature broadleaved trees. This ditch appears dry and no recent water flow. Its likely this is a historic feature connected with the historic mineral extraction as shown in App. 3.0



The whole development area is currently not shown on the Natural Resources Wales Terrestrial Phase 1 Habitat Survey (2023). (Appendix 2)

There is an area of planted conifer adjacent to the development site, likely planted around 1970(s). This woodland area is dominated by Sitka Spruce *Picea sitchensis*, with occasional broadleaf species including Beech *Fagus Sylvatica* and Sessile Oak *Quercus patrea* , both primarily found along the woodland edges, indicating old hedgerow or stream liner features. Much of the adjacent woodland is disturbed as shown by high volumes of ground Ivy *Hedera helix* and leaf litter. Given the early mature state of the planted woodland, no evidence of Bat roost (day or maternity) has been observed, with little features present that would likely be suitable.



Figure 3: Photo of planted conifer to west of development area

County records available from Aderyn show no records of Bat species but given the presence of a linear ditch feature (seasonal) and wet nature of the adjacent woodland area, it could be considered that Noctule Bat *Nyctalus noctule* and Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* could be present. It is recommended that a full tree survey be carried out which should identify any potential roost sites, depending on if works are needed to be carried out as part of this development.

Records of reptiles and amphibians have been recorded within the area and given the wet woodland nature of the surrounding habitat, it is more than foreseeable that these might be present. Amphibian species including Common Toad *Bufo bufo*, Frog *Rana temporaria* and Slow worm *Anguis fragilis* have been recorded as recently as 2018. All of the above are Category 1 Priority Species with European and UK legal protection under Section 7 (NERC) and are UK BAP priority species.



Figure 4: Habitats present adjacent to development area.

Conclusion

The development site has little ecological potential beyond the woodland area to the west of the development site. This area has the most ecological potential, with areas of semi mature conifer and occasional Sessile Oak and other broadleaved species. The presence of the narrow seasonal ditch suggests this could support other terrestrial species including amphibians recorded in 2018 in the local environment records centre.

During construction consideration to the adjoining woodland care should be undertaken and a full tree survey of the boundary trees undertaken to ascertain if any remedial works are necessary. If works can be ruled out and a buffer zone created between the new development and existing adjacent habitats, then little ecological impacts would be observed.