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Blakemore Cash & Carry, Bangor Preliminary Ecological Assessment

17.01.2019



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Client: The Bampton Property Group Ltd

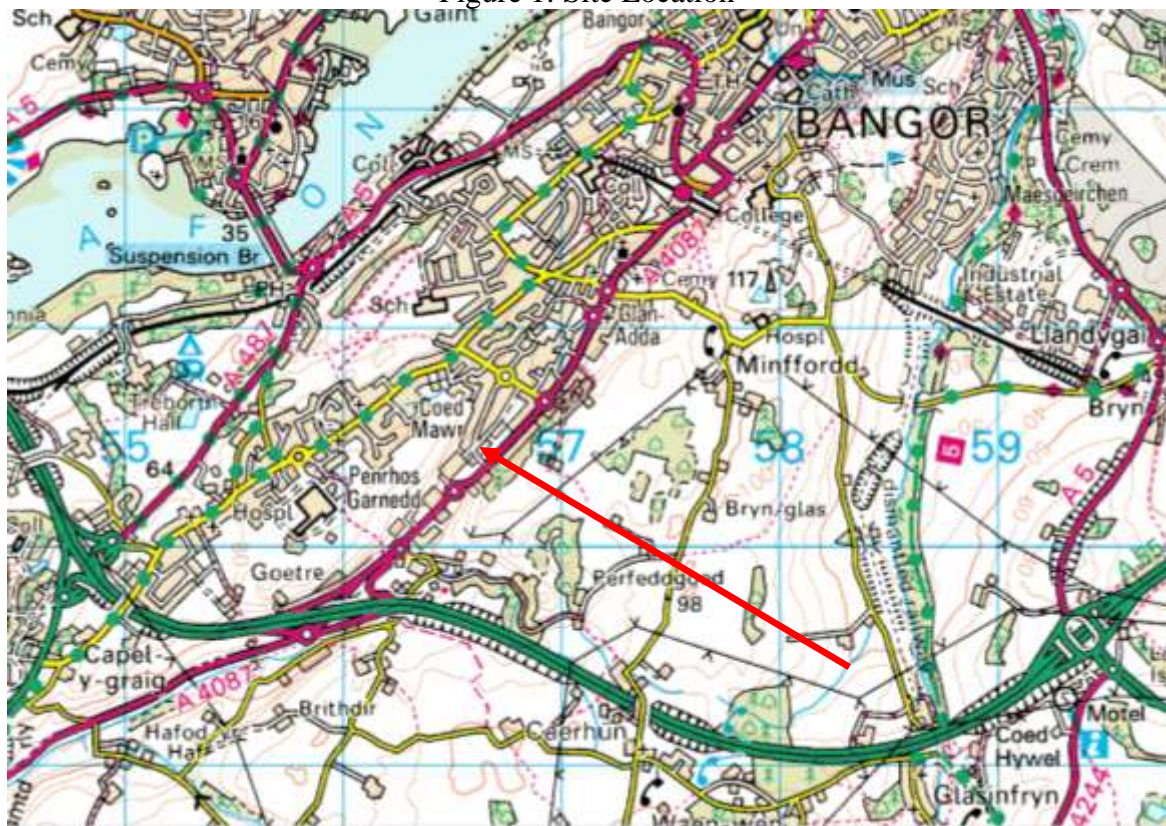
**Planning
Authority:** Gwynedd Council

**Grid
Reference:** SH 56660 70461

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Figure 1: Site Location



**Blakemore Cash & Carry
Ffordd Caernarfon
Bangor
Gwynedd
LL57 4SU**

Preliminary Ecological Assessment

17th January 2019

1. Summary

Cambrian Ecology Ltd was commissioned by the clients The Bampton Property Group Ltd to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) of a large, industrial unit and surrounding area on the main Caernarfon Road into Bangor, Gwynedd.

It is proposed to demolish the former cash and carry and erect a foodstore (Use Class 1A), car park, access and landscaping. There will also be reconfiguration of access and car park arrangements fronting the existing Dunelm. An ecological survey report is required to accompany the necessary planning application to be submitted to Gwynedd Council, as requested in the pre-application advice letter dated 26th October 2018.

No sign of bats or bat occupation was recorded during the survey and the building was concluded to have no potential to support roosting bats at any time of year. The structure is cement panels on a steel frame, which does not offer any crevices that are not subject to extreme temperature fluctuations, as well as the fact that the site is surrounded by very high light levels all night and no connectivity with any habitats in the wider area. There was no sign of any nesting birds in the form of droppings, feathers or nesting material either and it was concluded that the building is unlikely to support nesting birds at any time of the year.

The habitat on the proposed new Aldi site in Caernarfon Road, Bangor comprises a very limited range of habitats with the site dominated by managed, amenity grassland and hard standing in the form of car parking. Also present are two species-poor hedges, three trees, a small area of scrub and an introduced shrub. The site is separated from the adjacent A4087 by a stone wall. No 'Invasive Non-Native Species' (INNS) were recorded on the site.

A biological records search for nesting birds and bats was carried out to assess any potential impact on protected species outside the proposed development boundary and establish the 'zone of influence' of the development. The search revealed few records of any significance, with the majority being swifts (*Apus apus*), with a few bat records.

It was concluded that the building has no potential for roosting bats and is highly unlikely to support nesting birds at any time of year. There will be no impact on bats due to the proposed works and there is no reasonable justification for requesting any further survey work. This is considered to be an appropriate and proportionate course of action in this particular case. There is some minimal potential for impacts on nesting birds within the hedgerows on the south-east and north-west

boundaries. A few 'reasonable avoidance measures' are recommended to ensure no inadvertent breach of legislation with regard to nesting birds.

From a botanical point of view, the habitats on the site are species poor with a very limited assemblage of common species, with the site dominated by managed amenity grassland. No negative impact is anticipated as a result of the loss of this habitat.

It is understood that some tree felling has been recently carried out on the site. During the site visit there was evidence of some minimal blackthorn clearance in the western corner of the site. It is recommended that native tree species of benefit to wildlife are included in the final planting scheme for the site.

2. Introduction

Cambrian Ecology Ltd was commissioned by the clients The Bampton Property Group Ltd to carry out a PEA of a large, industrial unit and surrounding area on the main Caernarfon Road into Bangor, Gwynedd.

It is proposed to demolish the former cash and carry and erect a foodstore (Use Class 1A), car park, access and landscaping. There will also be reconfiguration of access and car park arrangements fronting the existing Dunelm. An ecological survey report is required to accompany the necessary planning application to be submitted to Gwynedd Council, as requested in the pre-application advice letter dated 26th October 2018.

The site is located at Grid Reference SH 56660 70461.

3. Methodologies

3.1 Habitats

The Habitat survey was carried out on 14th January 2019 by ecologist Chris Hall. The survey took the form of an extended Phase I survey and identified baseline ecological conditions, as well as any important or notable habitats. All habitats within the proposed development site were classified and species lists were drawn up for each habitat type identified and the habitat condition was assessed. In the context of this report, *important or notable habitats* are considered to be those which are of a sustainable size and which meet any of the following criteria:

- Habitats which have a high intrinsic ecological value, i.e. they support a diverse range of vascular plant and/or faunal species;
- Mature or semi-natural habitats in built-up areas;
- Any UK BAP priority habitats;
- Local BAP habitats considered having a significant extent and/or ecological interest.
- Invasive Non-Native Species, (INNS)

All habitats considered to have the potential to support rare, protected or otherwise notable species of flora and fauna were noted, as were any direct signs of these species. Where possible, habitats were

cross-referenced to any relevant UK priority habitats or Gwynedd Council's Biodiversity Action Plan 'Natur Gwynedd'.

3.2 Protected Species

A protected species survey of the site was carried out by Kate Williamson on 14th January 2019. The site was also assessed on its potential to support any protected or important species. During this survey, a search was made for field signs of protected or notable species and assessments made of the potential of habitats to support these species. In the context of this report important or notable species are considered to be those that meet any of the following criteria:

- Species protected by British or international law
- UK BAP priority species or local BAP species
- Nationally rare or scarce species
- Species of Conservation Concern (e.g. JNCC Red List, RSPB/BTO Red or Amber lists)

3.3 Desk Study

The desktop study aims to collate existing information about relevant priority species within 1km of the survey area. This information has relevance to the likelihood of these priority species being present within the survey area, as well as giving context to any species records from the actual site.

A data search for birds and bat species was conducted with the Local Environmental Records Centre; Cofnod. The search parameters were 1km from the survey site area.

4 **Survey Limitations**

Field signs for protected and important species are often difficult to find or absent from a site. For this reason, the site and its habitats are assessed on their potential to support these species.

Bats are highly mobile animals and some species move roosts on a regular basis. It is often possible to find signs of bat occupation outside of the time that they are resident, in the form of droppings and feeding remains, however, these dissipate over a period ranging from a few days to several months. Many species are crevice-dwelling and signs may be impossible to find. An accurate assessment of the potential of a building to support bats is therefore important to establish the need for further survey work. In this case, it has been confirmed that there is only minimal roosting potential for bats at any time of the year.

5 **Results**

5.1 Habitat

The habitat on the proposed new Aldi site in Caernarfon Road, Bangor comprises a very limited range of habitats with the site dominated by managed, amenity grassland and hard standing in the form of car parking. Also present are two species-poor hedges, three trees, a small area of scrub and an introduced shrub.

No INNS were recorded on the site.

Amenity Grassland

There are two areas of amenity grassland on the site which are managed by regular mowing. As a result, the species assemblage is dominated by plants that can withstand this type of management regime. The broadleaved plant species present include creeping buttercup; (*Ranunculus repens*), dandelion; (*Taraxacum officinale*), broadleaved dock; (*Rumex obtusifolius*), and common sorrel; (*Rumex acetosa*). Perennial rye grass; (*Lolium perenne*) is the dominant grass species with cock's foot; (*Dactylis glomerata*) also present in places.

Hard Standing

Much of the site is dominated by hard standing in the form of concrete and tarmac. Occasional plants of butterfly bush; (*Buddleia davidii*) are present where there are cracks in the surface

Introduced Shrub

There is one introduced shrub on the bank at the rear of the site in the form of an individual Barberry; (*Berberis stenophylla*), a relatively common garden shrub with no significant invasive tendencies.

Scrub

There is a small area of scrub to the rear of the building which is a mono-culture of blackthorn; (*Prunus spinosa*) suckers which appear to have originated from an individual shrub which has since been removed although the stump is still present.

Species Poor Hedges

There are two hedges on the site, one at the top of the steep bank to the rear of the building, and one just outside the site on the boundary between the site and the adjacent A4087.

The hedge to the rear of the building is a mono-culture of hawthorn; (*Crataegus monogyna*) and is managed on the top and on the boundary with the road but has been allowed to grow longer on the inside.

The hedge just outside the boundary with the A4087 is heavily managed and comprises hawthorn, hazel; (*Corylus avellana*), beech; (*Fagus sylvatica*) and ivy; (*Hedera helix*). There is also an ornamental species present in the form of Wilson's honeysuckle; (*Lonicera nitida*), a common garden hedging plant.

Stone wall

There is a stone wall on the boundary with the A4087. This is a mortared structure although there are some crevices. This is however a very small, isolated, fragmented habitat. The vegetation associated with the wall is dominated by ivy from the adjacent hedge.

Trees

There are three trees at the top of the bank to the rear of the building, all of which are Whitebeam; (*Sorbus aria*) a species commonly used in urban planting schemes.

5.2 Building

There is one large building on site, the former Blakemore's Cash and Carry warehouse. This is a large, modern structure on a steel frame. The exterior is clad with a combination of concrete block, brick and corrugated steel sheeting. The roof is also corrugated steel sheeting with the addition of some transparent plastic panels.

On the interior the building is one large void with no separate roof void. There are no internal or external crevices, no potential bat or bird access to the interior and the exterior is very brightly illuminated on all sides by street and security lighting from the surrounding trading estate.



Fig.2: Aerial photo of the former Blakemore Cash & Carry site and surrounding habitat

5.3 Other Protected Species Issues

The protected species survey was negative. There is however some limited potential for nesting birds to be present in hedgerows at the appropriate time of year. The majority of the site is heavily managed amenity grassland or hard standing, which does not provide any nesting habitat and is of low Biodiversity value. The site is surrounded by roads and hard standing, with no direct habitat connectivity with wooded areas to the south-east.

Despite the fact that the stone wall on the south-east boundary of the site has crevices within it, it is considered highly unlikely that any reptile or amphibian species will be present on the site. The habitat is totally isolated from any other potential habitats as the site is encircled by roads and

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concrete. There is minimal foraging potential within the site on the heavily managed amenity grassland.

5.4 Desk Study

A biological records search carried out with Cofnod revealed few records of any significance, with the majority being swifts and bats.

There was a total of 50 records of birds, from a total of 15 species. The most significant of these are the 18 records of swifts, the closest of which is only 56m from the centre of the site. Of the 8 bat records, the closest was from a residential building 142m away.

There are no designated sites that cover the proposed development area.

6 Habitat Evaluation and Impact Assessment

6.1 Habitat

From a botanical point of view, the habitats on the site are species poor with a very limited assemblage of common species, with the site dominated by managed amenity grassland. No negative impact is anticipated as a result of the loss of these habitats.

The hedges and trees are however of some potential benefit to Biodiversity as they will provide nesting cover for birds and both the hawthorn and Whitebeam produce flowers in spring which are a valuable nectar source in this very urban environment. Both species subsequently produce berries in the autumn which are potentially a valuable food resource for birds in the area. The sparse scrub is of minimal value as it is not dense enough to provide nesting cover. It is therefore concluded that although there could be some negative impact on Biodiversity if these habitats were lost, due to the very limited extent of the affected habitats, this impact would be both minor and localised. It should however be possible to mitigate against any negative impact in the design of any new landscaping scheme.

7 Species Evaluation and Impact Assessment

7.1 Bats

No sign of current or past use by bats was recorded during the site visit and the building is assessed as having almost no roosting potential at any time of the year. While it is impossible to say that bats will never be present, it is considered highly unlikely due to the following factors:

- high levels of lighting all around the building
- lack of connectivity with any of the woodland habitats in the wider area
- the construction materials of the building are such that extreme fluctuations in temperature would make roosting impossible during periods of very hot or cold weather and highly unlikely at other times.
- the lack of available crevices

It is considered highly unlikely, therefore, that there will be any impact on bat species at any level due to the proposed demolition works and no further survey work or mitigation measures are required.

7.2 Nesting Birds

There is only minimal potential for nesting birds to be present on the site due to the lack of any mature trees or dense vegetation. There are two hedgerows on opposite boundaries of the site that could potentially support individual nesting passerine species when in full leaf, along with occasional semi-mature trees on the north-west border. Any removal of this vegetation during the nesting season would have some potential for disturbance. A few RAMs are therefore recommended below to ensure no inadvertent breach of legislation pertaining to nesting birds. There is no potential for nesting birds to be present on the building itself.

9 **Mitigation Measures**

9.1 Habitats

Amenity Grassland, Building and Hard Standing

No mitigation measures are required for the potential loss of these habitats.

Hedges and Trees

It is recommended that the hedges and trees on the site are retained. If this is not possible, native trees/shrubs of benefit to wildlife must be included in the new landscaping scheme.

Introduced Shrub

No mitigation measures are required for the loss of the individual Barberry. If however ornamental species are to be used in any future landscaping scheme, it is recommended that species of benefit to wildlife are utilised.

Stone Wall

Due to the minimal Biodiversity value of this feature, no mitigation measures are required in relation to its potential loss.

9.2 Protected Species

Nesting birds

If any areas of hedgerow are to be cleared or the semi-mature trees felled, then this should be undertaken outside of the nesting bird season (1st March to 30th September). If this is not possible within work schedules, then they must be checked for any active bird nests by an experienced ecologist prior to clearance. In the event of any nesting being recorded, the clearance works must be delayed until such time as any chicks have fledged.

9.3 Biodiversity Gain

It is recommended that the planting of species of value to wildlife is included in the landscaping scheme. This enhancement of the diversity of the planting, combined with an appropriate management regime complies with Section 6 of the Environment Wales Act (2016), which requires Planning Authorities to seek Biodiversity gain as a routine part of planning consents being issued.

Native plants suitable for inclusion in the new planting scheme include:

Hawthorn; (*Crataegus monogyna*)

Holly; (*Ilex aquifolium*)

Elder; (*Sambucus nigra*)

Dog rose; (*Rosa canina*)

Guelder rose; (*Viburnum opulus*)

Rowan; (*Sorbus aucuparia*)

Whitebeam; (*Sorbus aria*)

Cherry; (*Prunus avium*)

Bird cherry; (*Prunus padus*)

Cherry plum; (*Prunus cerasifera*)

Crab apple; (*Malus sylvestris*)

10 **Legal Implications**

10.1 Nesting Birds

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, all nesting birds and their nests are protected. Once a bird places a single piece of material then it constitutes a nest. It is then an offence to cause damage to the bird, nest, eggs or chicks and immediate habitat which is likely to result in damage by causing the bird to desert its nest. This covers all bird species, with a small number of exceptions (pest species which can be controlled by special license).

In 2000, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW Act) was made law, strengthening the legal protection for many species and introducing a 'reckless disturbance' offence.

Planning Authorities are also obliged to take nesting birds into account in relation to planning decisions following guidance from the Welsh Government detailed in Technical Advice Note (TAN) 5.

11 Appendices

11.1 Site photographic record



Interior of the former Blakemore Cash & Carry building



Front elevation of the building, facing the Caernarfon Road



Amenity grassland to the front of the building



Hedgerow growing just outside the stone wall site boundary



Gable end of the building

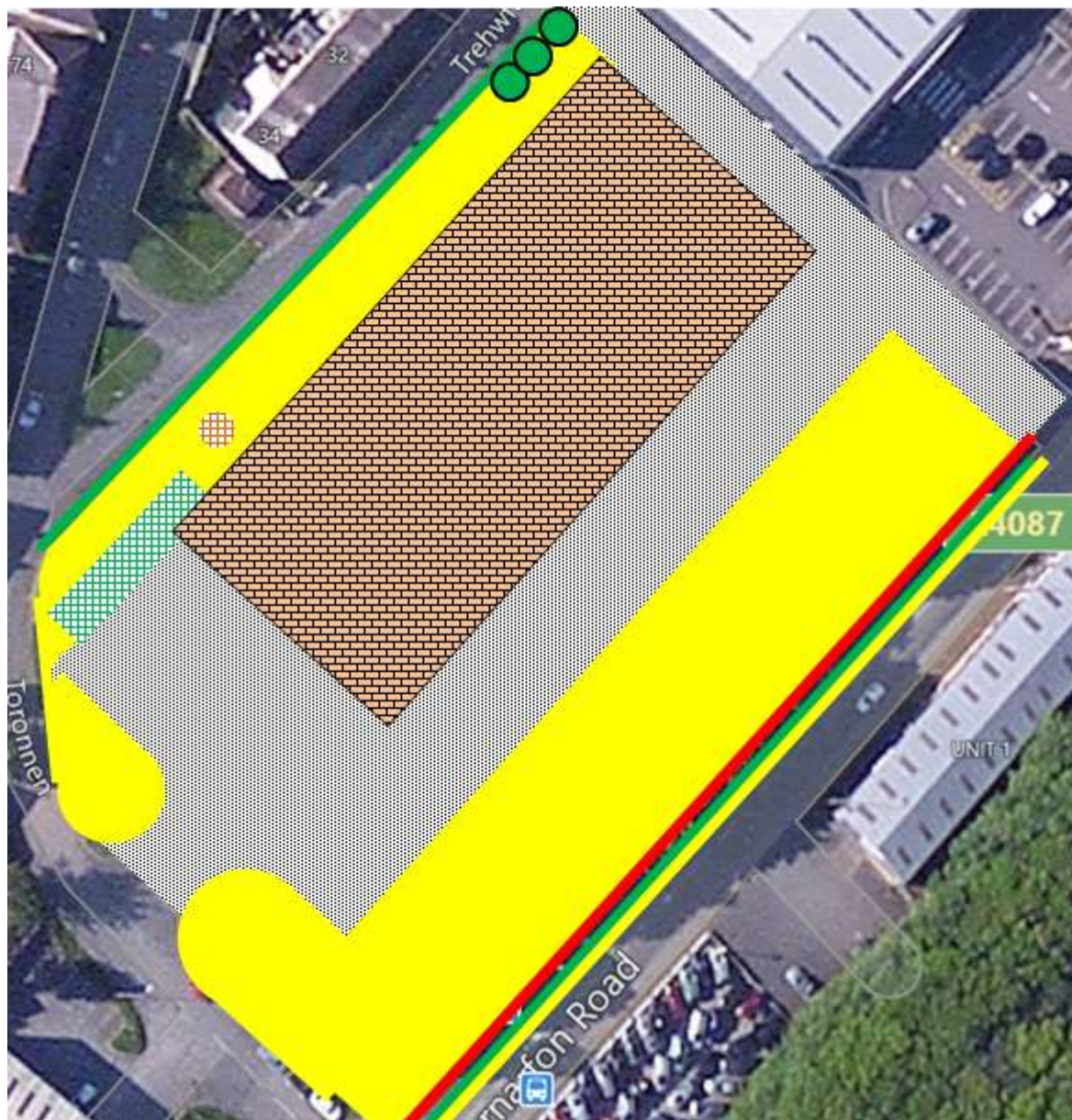


Rear elevation with remaining blackthorn scrub











Grass bank to the rear of the building with occasional tree/shrub and hedgerow

11.2 Phase 1 Habitat Map



Key

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
|  | Amenity Grassland |
|  | Building |
|  | Hard Standing |
|  | Introduced Shrub |
|  | Scrub |
|  | Species Poor Hedge |
|  | Stone Wall |
|  | Trees |

11.3 Review Table

Name	Task	Date
Kate Williamson	Author	17.01.2019
Chris Hall	Review	27.01.2019