



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

**LAND AT BALDWIS CRESCENT,
CRYMLYN BURROWS, SKEWEN,
SWANSEA**

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

OCTOBER 2021

Craig Lloyd Developments

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Proposed Development: Land at Badlwins Crescent, Crymlyn Burrows, Skewen, Swansea, Swansea

Preliminary Ecological Assessment

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Drawings

Drawing number	Title
20/049 1001	Site Location Plan and Block Plan

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

A preliminary ecological assessment was undertaken of a commercial site at Baldwins Crescent in Crymlyn Burrows in Skewen to the east of Swansea in south Wales in support of an application to develop the site.

The work involved a phase 1 habitat survey to categorise the habitats present, an assessment of the site's ability to provide suitable habitats for protected species, in particular bats, and recommendations for further survey and actions as necessary.

There are a number of statutorily designated sites within 2km of the site notified for biological reasons.

The closest Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) lies approximately 350m to the north of the site.

The site has been cleared and previously developed / used for commercial purposes. The habitats on the site include:

- Bare ground; and
- Tall ruderal vegetation.

No invasive non-native species were observed on the site. Japanese knotweed is known to be present within 25m of the southern boundary.

There are no buildings or trees on the site and therefore no potential bat roosting habitat. The buildings on the adjacent land are steel framed aluminium cladded structures with no potential for bats to be present used for commercial purposes.

There is no potential for any protected species to be present on the site. No evidence of any protected species was recorded within the site boundary.

It is considered that no further ecological surveys are required.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OBJECTIVE

The objectives of this report are to:

- identify the habitats present on the site;
- identify the potential for protected species to be present on site;
- determine the presence of protected sites on or adjacent to the site;
- using the information gathered to determine whether there may be any impacts (both positive and negative) on protected species present;
- provide recommendations for further survey as necessary; and
- suggest outline mitigation and enhancement ideas and principles

1.2 METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives set out above, field based assessments of habitats and protected species were undertaken, with the results being assessed for any impacts (adverse and / or positive).

The impact assessment was undertaken by ecological feature rather than by section i.e. each subject is discussed and assessed separately and summarised in conjunction with the others.

1.3 SITE DESCRIPTION

Photos are at **Appendix A**.

The rectangular site is approximately 0.35ha in extent and is located on part of the former Chain Works industrial site in Crymlyn Burrows in Skewen to the east of Swansea in south Wales (centred on NGR SS 69449303) (**Figures 1 & 2; drawing SKT-01**).

The site is dominated by bare ground formed from crushed stone and tarmac scalplings which is used for storage and parking (Plates 1 & 2). There is a low (1m high) bund along the southern boundary which is dominated by tall ruderal vegetation, herbs and grasses (Plates 3 & 4).

The land beyond the western boundary is a steep embankment carrying Fabian Way, the main road access into Swansea from the M4 to the north east. This embankment is dominated by scrub and immature secondary woodland

The boundaries of the site are fenced with either palisade fence or (overgrown with hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*)) stock net.

There are no structures on the site.

There are a number of mature trees, sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and poplar (*Populus canescens*) on land adjacent to the southern boundary.

The site is bounded to the north and east by industrial and commercial properties and the recovered dune systems on former industrial sites to the south and west with Swansea Bay beyond.

Figure 1 – location of the proposed Baldwins Crescent development site (arrowed red)



(Image courtesy of Google Earth)

Figure 2 – detailed view of the proposed Baldwins Crescent development site (approximate boundary in red)



(Image courtesy of Google Earth)

1.4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

It is understood that the development proposal is to clear the site and build eight light industrial units.

1.5 STUDY AREA

The field survey looked at the red line development area itself and up to 20m from the site boundaries where possible.

The biological records data search used a 2km search buffer around the central point of the site; parameters included statutorily and non-statutorily designated sites, European protected species, UK protected species and species of local conservation concern.

1.6 PREVIOUS SURVEYS

None known.

1.7 CONSTRAINTS

There may be records that remain either undigitised or unsubmitted to the local records centre. Lack of records in no way demonstrates or proves absence.

There were no other constraints to the survey.

2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTERNATIONAL

European Union legislation requires that member states designate sites for the protection of habitats and species included in the annexes of both Council Directive 92/43/EC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna (the Habitats Directive) and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (the Birds Directive). This legislation is implemented in the UK by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (“the Habitat Regulations”). This results in sites being designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas respectively (SPAs).

Following the UK’s exit from the European Union on 31st January 2020, the law responsible for continuing to implement this legislation through the transition period is The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU EXIT) Regulations 2019. All legislation within the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2017 still apply within the UK under the amendment to the 2017 regulations until otherwise notified.

2.2 NATIONAL (UK)

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) allows sites to be designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for one or all of the following categories:

- Flora;
- Fauna;
- Habitat; and
- Geological importance.

European designated sites are automatically designated as SSSIs prior to their designation.

The relevant legislation includes:

- The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 (as amended);
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended);
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000;
- Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996;
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992; and
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

2.3 NATIONAL (WALES)

2.3.1 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 sets out the requirement for the ‘sustainable management of natural resources’ together with new ways of working to achieve this. Part 1 of the Environment Act sets out Wales’ approach to planning and managing natural resources at a national and local level with a general purpose linked to statutory ‘principles of sustainable management of natural resources’ defined within the Act.

Section 6 – Biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty

Section 6 under Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduced an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (the S6 duty) for public authorities in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales.

The S6 duty requires that public authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems.

Section 7 - Biodiversity lists and duty to take steps to maintain and enhance biodiversity

This section replaces the duty in section 42 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) (NERCA 2006). The Welsh Ministers will publish, review and revise lists of living organisms and types of habitat in Wales, which they consider are of key significance to sustain and improve biodiversity in relation to Wales.

The Welsh Ministers must also take all reasonable steps to maintain and enhance the living organisms and types of habitat included in any list published under this section, and encourage others to take such steps.

Part 1 of the Act, including Sections 6 and 7, came into force on May 21, 2016.

Other elements of NERCA 2006 may still apply.

2.3.2 The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act became law in April 2015 and is concerned with improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

It will make the public bodies in Wales listed in the Act think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

To help public bodies achieve the same vision, the Act puts in place seven well-being goals. Linked to the goals a set of National Indicators are currently under development to help measure whether we are achieving the goals including the Resilient Wales goal.

Resilient Wales' goal

'A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).'

The Well-being of Future Generations Act recognises the importance of nature and its biodiversity. The resilient Wales' goal will help with nature recovery objectives in Wales.

The Act establishes a statutory Future Generations Commissioner for Wales to support the public bodies listed in the Act to work towards achieving the well-being goals.

The Act also establishes Public Services Boards (PSBs) for each local authority area in Wales. PSBs are tasked with improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of its area by working to achieve the well-being goals.

2.3.3 Other

Planning Policy Wales (Welsh Government, 2018) and Planning Policy Wales Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning (Welsh Assembly Government, September 2009) set out the protection given to wildlife (sites, habitats and species) by the planning system operational in Wales.

2.4 LOCAL AND REGIONAL

The proposed development is wholly within City and County of Swansea (CCS) area of responsibility. Therefore, all policies adopted by that Planning Authority will apply, including policies which may not be specific to nature conservation or the natural environment but that may apply or be relevant and should be considered during the planning process. Specifically, policies ER 6, ER 8 and ER9 apply:

ER 6 Designated Sites of Ecological Importance, regarding the effects of development upon sites of international, national and local nature conservation interest

Development will not be permitted that would result in a likely significant adverse effect on the integrity of sites of international or national nature conservation importance, except in the circumstances specified in relevant legislation. Development that would adversely affect locally designated sites of nature conservation importance should maintain and enhance the nature conservation interest of the site. Where this cannot be achieved development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

- i. The need for the development outweighs the need to protect the site for nature conservation purposes;*
- ii. There is no satisfactory alternative location for the development that avoids nature conservation impacts; and*
- iii. Any unacceptable harm is kept to a minimum by effective avoidance measures and mitigation, or where this is not feasible, compensatory measures must be put in place to ensure that there is no overall reduction in the nature conservation value of the area.*

ER 8 Habitats and Species, regarding the effects of development on the resilience of protected habitats and species

Development proposals that would have a significant adverse effect on the resilience of protected habitats and species will only be permitted where:

- i. The need for development outweighs the nature conservation importance of the site;*
- ii. The developer demonstrates that there is no satisfactory alternative location for the development which avoids nature conservation impacts; and*
- iii. Any unavoidable harm is minimised by effective mitigation to ensure that there is no reduction in the overall nature conservation value of the area. Where this is not feasible, compensation measures designed to conserve, enhance, manage and, where appropriate, restore natural habitats, and species must be provided*

ER 9 Ecological Networks and Features of Importance for Biodiversity, regarding the effects of development on the connectivity of ecological networks and features of importance for biodiversity

Development proposals will be expected to maintain, protect and enhance ecological networks and features of importance for biodiversity. Particular importance will be given to maintaining and enhancing the connectivity of ecological networks which enable the dispersal and functioning of protected and priority species.

Development proposals that could result in a significant adverse effect on the connectivity of ecological networks and features of importance for biodiversity will only be permitted where:

- i. The need for the development outweighs the nature conservation value of the site;*
- ii. It can be demonstrated that there is no satisfactory alternative location for the development;*

- iii. *A connected element of the natural resource is retained as part of the design of the development; and iv. Compensatory provision will be made of comparable ecological value to that lost as a result of the development.*

2.5 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The proposed development will be undertaken wholly under the auspices of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

3 DESK STUDY

3.1 SUMMARY

There are three statutorily designated sites within 2km of the proposed development site.

There are three non-statutorily designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) within 1km of the site.

A full species search from the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre was not requested due to the habitats present on the site and lack of opportunities for ecological receptors.

3.2 BACKGROUND

A desk study provides background information on historical and current biological data which can identify ecological constraints, mitigation, and biodiversity enhancement opportunities.

3.3 METHODOLOGY

The Multi-Agency Geographical Information System (MAGIC) website (www.magic.gov.uk) was consulted for the presence of statutorily designated sites.

The Local Biodiversity Action Plan was consulted for the presence of locally notified sites.

3.4 CONSTRAINTS

There were no constraints to the data search.

3.5 RESULTS

3.5.1 Statutorily protected sites

3.5.1.1 Internationally designated sites

The Crymlyn Bog Ramsar site lies within 350m of the development site's northern boundary.

This site is one of the largest valley floodplain mires in Wales, and amongst the most important in the United Kingdom, the site forms part of an extensive inter-estuarine complex. The site includes the adjacent Pant-y-Sais Fen and consists of a complex mosaic of vegetation types made up of communities characteristic of both nutrient-rich and nutrient-poor conditions. Notable plant communities include the semi-floating fen and the nationally rare cotton-grass *Eriophorum gracile* community. The area is notable for its rich invertebrate fauna, including many nationally rare or highly localized species associated with mires

This site will not be affected by the proposed development due to the distance between it and the site as well as the proposed land use having no impacts greater than those previously and currently on and around the site. This classification will not be considered further in this report.

3.5.1.2 European designated sites

Crymlyn Bog is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for the following reasons:

Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site

- Transition mires and quaking bogs: Transition mires and quaking bogs occur on deep, wet topogenous peats over a relatively small area of this extensive coastal lowland site. Bottle sedge *Carex rostrata* and bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* are important components of some stands, together with common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, water horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, star sedge *Carex echinata*, the locally rare mud sedge *Carex limosa* and, in places, the nationally rare slender cottongrass *Eriophorum gracile*. The floristic character of some of these stands displays affinities to NVC types M9 *Carex rostrata* – *Calliergon cuspidatum/giganteum* mire and S27 *Carex rostrata* – *Potentilla palustris* tall-herb fen, but other expressions of this habitat at Crymlyn include a stronger poor-fen element in which bog-mosses (including *Sphagnum squarrosum*, *S. denticulatum* and *S. fimbriatum*) figure prominently. The transition mire and quaking bog at this site is vulnerable to the continuing expansion of common reed *Phragmites australis*, encouraged by trends of increasing site wetness, nutrient-enrichment and lack of grazing.
- Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the Caricion davallianae Crymlyn supports the largest area of *Cladium*-dominated vegetation in south Wales. Many of the stands in which great fen-sedge *Cladium mariscus* occurs as sole dominant are typically species-poor, but other areas display a more diverse vegetation in which tufted-sedge *Carex elata*, royal fern *Osmunda regalis* and a range of tall-herb fen species are prominent. Some of these stands are unique in a Welsh context and are strongly reminiscent of NVC type S24 *Phragmites australis* – *Peucedanum palustre* tall-herb fen, which is otherwise largely confined to eastern England.

Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*).

This site will not be affected by the proposed development due to the distance between it and the site as well as the proposed land use having no impacts greater than those previously and currently on and around the site. This classification will not be considered further in this report.

3.5.1.3 United Kingdom designated sites

To be able to designate sites under international and European directives, sites must first be notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). To this end Crymlyn Bog is designated as SSSI for the presence of fen (topogenous mire) communities, wet woodland, associated invertebrate assemblages, a substantial population of the nationally rare slender cotton grass *Eriophorum gracile* and a population of the nationally scarce hornet robberfly *Asilus crabroniformis*. It is the most extensive area of lowland fen in South Wales and is situated 3.5km east of central Swansea within a landscape heavily influenced by past and present industrial activities. The site is part of a larger inter-estuarine complex including Pant-y-Sais SSSI and the Neath flood plain.

The Pant y Sais SSSI is designated as it is an area of lowland fen located in a narrow valley which was a former course of the River Neath. The site supports a range of fenland communities including *Sphagnum* and bryophyte dominated areas of poorer fen vegetation, *Molinia caerulea* communities, swamp areas with abundant *Typha latifolia* and *Typha angustifolia*, and developing fen carr. Formerly part of the same hydrological system as Crymlyn Bog. The Tennant Canal section acts as a refuge for aquatic plants, including *Butomus umbellatus* which is rare in the county.

These sites will not be affected by the proposed development due to the distance between them and the site as well as the proposed land use having no impacts greater than those previously and currently on and around the site. This classification will not be considered further in this report.

3.5.2 Non-statutory designations

There are three Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) within 2km of the proposed development site:

Kilvey Hill – notified for the presence of lowland heath, deciduous woodland, purple moor grass and rush pasture, scrub, reedbeds, meadows, broadleaved woodland, semi-improved grassland, acid grassland, wet heath and wet woodland.

Tennant Canal – notified for the presence of scrub, wet woodland, and watercourses

Swansea Bay – notified for the presence of a number of marine and coastal habitats including maritime cliffs and slopes, saltmarsh, *Sabellaria* reefs, mudflats, muddy gravels, mussel beds, sand dunes, lowland fen, neutral grassland.

None of these will be affected by the proposed development due to the distance between them and the site as well as the proposed land use having no impacts greater than those previously and currently on and around the site. This classification will not be considered further in this report.

3.5.3 Species: SEWBreC data search

Not undertaken.

3.6 PREVIOUS SURVEYS

None known.

4 STATUTORILY PROTECTED SITES

Not applicable.

5 NON-STATUTORY SITES

Not applicable.

6 PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY

6.1 SUMMARY

A number of habitats were recorded within the survey area. These included:

- Bare ground; and
- Tall ruderal vegetation

There was no habitat suitable for use by any protected species on the site.

No features of interest were recorded.

The habitats are shown on **Figure 3** below.

6.2 BACKGROUND

The Phase 1 habitat survey was carried out to assess the existing habitats, identify any protected habitats or species that may be present, determine the impact of the proposed works on them, and identify any mitigation measures that may be necessary. This was done by undertaking both a desk study and field survey.

The survey was undertaken on the 7th October 2021.

Phase 1 habitat survey is a way of recording the basic habitat data to form a baseline level of knowledge of the ecology of a site and provide recommendations for future surveys if considered necessary.

6.3 METHODOLOGY

6.3.1 Desk study:

Refer to section 3 above.

6.3.2 Field survey:

Hugh Dixon, an experienced surveyor from Celtic Ecology and Conservation Ltd carried out a habitat assessment and mapping exercise in October 2021 using the Phase 1 habitat survey technique. Where necessary, features of note are assigned Target Notes and referenced accordingly. Nomenclature follows Stace (1997)¹.

6.4 CONSTRAINTS

None.

¹ Stace, C (1997). *New Flora of the British Isles* (2nd Ed.). Cambridge University Press

6.5 RESULTS

6.5.1 Habitats

The following habitats were found on the site and are mapped at **Figure 3** below:

- Bare ground; and
- Tall ruderal vegetation.

No target notes were made:

Photos are at **Appendix A**.

No Target Notes were made.

Figure 3 – habitat survey results.



(Image courtesy of Google Earth)

6.5.1.1 Tall ruderal vegetation

This habitat was found in a very strip along the fenceline on the site's southern boundary with a very low species diversity including bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), rosebay willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*), wild radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), broad leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*) and ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*). It is a very small area and has a very ecological value and will not be considered further in this report.

6.5.1.1 Bare ground

This habitat is comprised of crushed stone, tarmac scalpings and soil. There is a very sparse population of ribwort plantain, creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and bramble. It has no ecological value and will not be considered further in this report.

6.5.2 Protected species assessment

6.5.2.1 Bats

There is no suitable habitat on the site for roosting bats. The habitats on the site are sub-optimal for foraging purposes. The buildings adjacent to the site appeared to be unsuitable for roosting bats. There are mature trees on the land to the south of the southern boundary which are of an age and size whereby they could be used by roosting bats; however, these are on third party land, will not be affected by the development with no potential roost features identifiable from the ground.

Bats will not be considered further in this report.

6.5.2.2 Dormouse

There is no suitable habitat on the development site for this species and therefore it will not be considered further in this report.

6.5.2.3 Great crested newt

There is no suitable habitat for this species on or adjacent to the development site and therefore it will not be considered further in this report.

6.5.2.4 Otter

There is no suitable habitat for this species on or adjacent to the development site and therefore it will not be considered further in this report.

6.5.2.5 Badger

There is no suitable habitat for this species on or adjacent to the development site and therefore it will not be considered further in this report.

6.5.2.6 Water vole

There is no suitable habitat for this species on or adjacent to the development site and therefore it will not be considered further in this report.

6.5.2.7 Hedgehog

It is possible that this species will utilise the boundary habitats and vegetated bund for foraging purposes. There is no sheltering habitat available. Additionally, as the levels of disturbance are high it

is therefore considered unlikely that animals would be killed or injured as a result of the proposed development.

6.5.2.8 Birds

There is suitable habitat for this species in the vegetation on third party land. There is no suitable habitat for this group on the development site, either for scrub / tree nesting or ground nesting and, therefore, this group will not be considered further in this report.

6.5.2.1 Amphibians

While the vegetated bund is potentially suitable habitat for this group it is subject of high levels of disturbance and therefore it will not be considered further in this report.

6.5.2.2 Reptiles

While the vegetated bund is potentially suitable habitat for this group it is subject of high levels of disturbance and therefore it will not be considered further in this report.

6.5.3 Other features

No evidence of any other protected species was observed on the site.

No invasive non-native species (e.g. Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)) were observed on the site.

7 HABITATS - EVALUATION, IMPACT CHARACTERISATION AND ASSESSMENT

It is considered that as the bund will be retained as part of the development, there will be no adverse impacts on any of the habitats present as a result of the development.

8 SPECIES - EVALUATION, IMPACT CHARACTERISATION AND ASSESSMENT

Not applicable.

9 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The site has no ecological value at any level as a result of the surrounding environment, the habitats present, the use to which the site has been and is currently put to and the levels of disturbance.

The habitats present on and adjacent to the site have no ecological interest and do not provide any protected (or other) species with suitable habitat.

It is considered that no other or further ecological surveys are required.

It should be noted that should evidence of any protected species become apparent during the course of the development, all relevant work will cease immediately and consultation made with a suitably experienced, and where necessary, licensed, ecologist. Consultation with the local planning authority or , in the case of European Protected Species and badgers, Natural Resources Wales. One or all of the following may be required: further surveys, mitigation and / or a licence.

An ecologist should be “on call” for the duration of project in the event that a protected species is found.

It is recommended that consideration be given to the inclusion of enhancement features to benefit wildlife are included within the design of the final development proposals and post-development landscaping scheme on the site, for example, pole mounted bat boxes, bird boxes etc.

10 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A - PHOTOS

Plate 1 –Eastern boundary facing Baldwins Crescent



Plate 2 – Main body of the site



Plate 3 – Western boundary of the site



Plate 4 – Vegetated bund (looking east)



Plate 5 – Vegetated bund (looking west)



APPENDIX B – DRAWING 20/049 1001

