

SPECTRUM ECOLOGY



Protected Species Surveys

Tree and Hedgerow Survey

Land adjacent to 28 Michna Street, Port Talbot SA12 6UJ.

Report Prepared for:

F&G Property Development Ltd.

February 2023

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Ecological Consultancy

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Executive Summary

Spectrum Ecology were commissioned by F&G Developments Ltd to undertake a tree and hedgerow appraisal and assessment of a site to inform and support a planning application to develop the site for residential dwellings.

Although this document is not a full Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, the assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the CIEEM 'Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisals 2013' where possible.

The conclusions of this survey indicate that the site supports three (3) very low quality Holly trees *Ilex aquifolium* which has been subject to poor tree work over the years and harshly topped creating multiple point failure sections of the tree. The remainder of the site is bounded by Privet *Ligustrum ovalifolium* which has been allowed to dominate the site and exceeds 6 metres in height on two of the three boundaries. The Privet is also shading the garden to the point where the grass amenity lawn is unable to establish after dying back.

Other species noted were a single willow (*Salix* sps.) which is self-seeded, a Forsythia *Forsythia x intermedia* of poor quality which has reached a height of 1.5m and approximately five (5) Stag's Horn Sumach Trees *Rhus typhina* which has suckered and invaded beyond the boundary of the site into the adjacent lane. Due to the size of the site and the assemblages of trees and shrubs found, together with the existing intensively urbanised areas surrounding the site, it is considered that there are no ecological features or value in the species found. It is considered that the development will provide an opportunity to enhance and improve the site and increase the ecological service it provides. Where any ecological features may exist, such as bird nesting within the Privet, they can be mitigated within any development proposal.

Desk Study

Remit of document

To provide a high level overview of the current ecological status of the trees and shrubs within the Proposed Development Site (PDS) and outline the potential benefits and impacts of developing the site in the future.

Site Profile

The PDS is approximately 240 square metres of land which has historically been used as the residential rear garden and amenity space for 28 Michna Street, Port Talbot. The land has clear signs that it has not been managed historically which includes the hedgerows found on the three boundaries.

The PDS has very low conservation value, due to lack of management and vegetation species present as well as being surrounded by intensively managed anthropogenic habitats, consisting of residential dwellings and amenity gardens, which lack any meaningful connectivity to the wider landscape.

Development Proposals

Proposed development

The client has submitted a planning application for the erection of pair of semi-detached dwellings with parking, landscaping and amenity areas.

Desk Study - Summary

The Defra magic map application and NPT planning portal were interrogated to establish the proximity of areas holding conservation designations.

Habitats

There are no habitat parcels within the PDS that are deemed as priority habitats by the Environment Wales Act 2016.

Species

A rudimentary records check searching for historic records of protected species within 2km of the centre of the PDS was undertaken. There are a no recent or historic records for protected species in close proximity to the PDS. Therefore, no further analysis is required.

Designated areas

The Defra magic maps app shows that there are no sites within 2km of the centre of the PDS which hold a statutory designation. There are two sites that include Crymlyn Burrows SSSI 5km to the west and Margam Moors SSSI, 5km to the east.

Is it considered that these two sites are well beyond the zone of influence of this development and require no further analysis.

Site Survey – Summary – Surveyor experience

A site survey was undertaken 03/02/2023 by Rob Jones and Leigh Tuck at 14:00 -16:00 hrs which documented the trees and shrubs on site as well as any habitat or ecological features found within. The weather was mild for the year recorded at 8°C with no wind and complete cloud cover.

The site boundary was dominated by privet on the northern and eastern boundary and a line of three holly trees and a Sumac tree on the southern boundary. The privet had been topped several years ago at approximately 2 metres, which had been allowed to regrow from the point

of cutting. The new growth has resulted in a further 2 metres growth. Garden waste has also been placed at the base of the privet on the eastern boundary.

The holly trees have also been topped at a height of approximately 3 metres. In both the instance of privet and holly trees, topping is not a recognised arboricultural good practice as identified in BS3998: 2010 trees Works – Recommendations. The topping having the potential to create potential points of failure at the point of cutting.

Also, placing garden waste at the base of the privet also has the potential to create root compaction and hinder the shrubs' potential for gaseous exchange.

The surveyors, and authors of this report, were Rob Jones and Leigh Tuck, both Natural Resources Wales licensed for a number of protected species. Both have a wide understanding in countryside and habitat management with over 20+ years experience. Within the course of their careers both have also been involved in monitoring and surveying of European protected species such as Bats, Dormouse and Great Crested Newt and have worked extensively in habitat management for the enhancement of protected species. Rob also has a level 4 National Certificate in Arboriculture and has a broad and detailed knowledge of tree management and woody vegetation formation and physiology.

Conclusion

The trees and shrubs found on the boundary of the site hold a very low to negligible ecological value and it is considered the loss of this vegetation would not be detrimental to the site or wider area.

Whilst it could be argued that the hedgerow and trees hold some visual amenity and offer screening from the highway and adjacent electrical substation, this could also be achieved with fencing which would be more in keeping with the wider housing estate.

Due to the high level of cats observed in the area, it is unlikely the Privet hedge would be used for nesting birds and the Holly trees did not have adequate structure to support nesting birds. No historic birds nests were found during the survey.

Therefore, the proposed development with enhancement is likely to result in a better ecological resource through the imposition of a planning condition requiring bird boxes on the proposed dwellings, than either a continuation of the current management regime or abandonment of the site.

With the completion of the above recommended condition, it is considered that the development proposal will be capable of minimising and mitigating potentially negative impacts of any future development.

Appendix 1

Images of the site





Disclaimer

This assessment was made of the site described at a particular time. The evidence that this report contains can be used to draw conclusions as to the likely significant effect and the likely impacts of any proposed development on the site. Every effort has been taken to provide an accurate assessment of the situation pertaining to this site. No liability can be assumed for omissions or changes after the survey has taken place.