



15th October 2020

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Technical Note: Ecological Walkover

Site: Heol Tabor, Cwmafan

Introduction

Koru Ecology Associates was commissioned in September 2020 by Wayne Goodridge (the Applicant) via Rob Bowen Planning (the Agent) to conduct a walkover visit of the above Site in relation to ecology. The Site is centred on approximate National Grid Reference SS7821192731 and its location is shown in Figure 1 below.

The Applicant intends to submit a planning application to Neath Port Talbot Council for the development of six dwelling houses and associated infrastructure on the Site. Ecology is a material consideration during the planning process, however a full Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was not required by the Neath Port Talbot Council Ecologist due to the size, location and current condition of the Site.

Methodology

A site visit was completed on 1st October 2020 by Diana Clark MSc MCIEEM of Koru Ecology Associates. The site was walked and notes were made on the type of habitats present, the presence of any Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) and any potential for protected/notable species.

Results

The Site is located towards the north eastern end of the settlement of Cwmafan, immediately to the north of Heol Tabor. To the south, west and east, there is existing housing that makes up the rest of Cwmafan, and to the north is an area of scrubby woodland, beyond which is a network of fields and hedgerows. A sketch showing key features on the Site is shown in Figure 2 below and these are described more fully in the following paragraphs.

The Site was cleared around 5 years ago and then re-landscaped in 2019, resulting in a number of bunds being present (Figure 3). At the western edge of the Site, beyond the bunds, a drainage ditch runs roughly parallel to the fence line and enters a culvert in the south-western corner (see Figure 4). An additional drainage ditch runs parallel to the northern boundary of the Site and drains into the western ditch (see Figure 5). A less well-formed drainage ditch cuts across the Site from the east and also drains into the main ditch.

The majority of the Site is bare ground with very sparse vegetation, which is largely made up of common grassy and ruderal species (see Figures 2 and 6). Some less sparsely vegetated areas are present (see Figure 2), largely associated with the boundaries of the Site and dominated by coarse grass species such as cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and false oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*). No trees are present, but some re-growth and some young specimens of butterfly-bush (*Buddleja davidii*), gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and a single sapling sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) were noted.

Several patches of the invasive non-native Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) were noted on the Site, together with a small patch of young Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) (see Figures 2, 7 and 8).

Based on information obtained as a result of the above, an assessment of the site for ecology is made and appropriate recommendations given in the following paragraphs.

Assessment

The Site is of limited quality for ecology, with the most important features being as follows:

1. **Drainage ditches.** These represent an opportunity for enhancement, which could tie in to requirements for Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs). This is discussed further in the Recommendations section below.
2. **Potential for reptiles, amphibians and small mammals.** There is some limited potential for low numbers of common reptile and amphibian species to be present, in particular

along the north, east and south edges of the Site where less sparse grassy / ruderal habitat is present. The presence of small mammals such as shrews, voles and mice, may also be possible in the same areas of habitat. Appropriate precautions should be taken to ensure these species groups are not harmed during the development. This is discussed further in the Recommendations section below.

3. **Presence of INNS.** It is illegal under the Wildlife and Countryside Act to cause spread of Himalayan Balsam and Japanese knotweed in the wild. Appropriate measures should therefore be put into place in order to deal with the INNS identified on the Site. This is discussed further in the Recommendations section below.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are given to address likely impacts of the development proposals on ecology, as well as to ensure some net ecological benefit is obtained on the Site in accordance with Welsh Government requirements.

1. **SUDs plan.** It is recommended that an appropriate SUDs plan is developed with input from an appropriately competent ecologist, in order to obtain some net benefit for ecology on the Site. Due to the presence of several drainage ditches of poor ecological quality, these areas may easily be improved, for example by using an appropriate swale mix as advised by the Neath Port Talbot planning ecologists team.
2. **INNS Strategy.** A written strategy for dealing with the INNS present on the Site should be put together and carried out as stated, in order to avoid committing an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.
3. **Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW).** A suitably competent ecologist should be employed to carry out an ECoW role during the initial stages of the work when the remainder of the Site may be cleared. The ECoW should conduct a finger-tip search for common reptile and amphibian species, as well as small mammals, focusing in particular on the areas of remaining grassland. Any individuals found should be carefully removed from the site and placed in suitable habitat nearby.
4. **Additional ecological enhancement.** Consideration should be given towards installing 'built-in' bat and bird boxes on the new properties, in order to ensure further biodiversity net gain on the Site.

If the above recommendations are followed and carried out correctly, the development proposals should comply with relevant planning policy and legislation relating to biodiversity and ecology.

Figure 1. Site location.

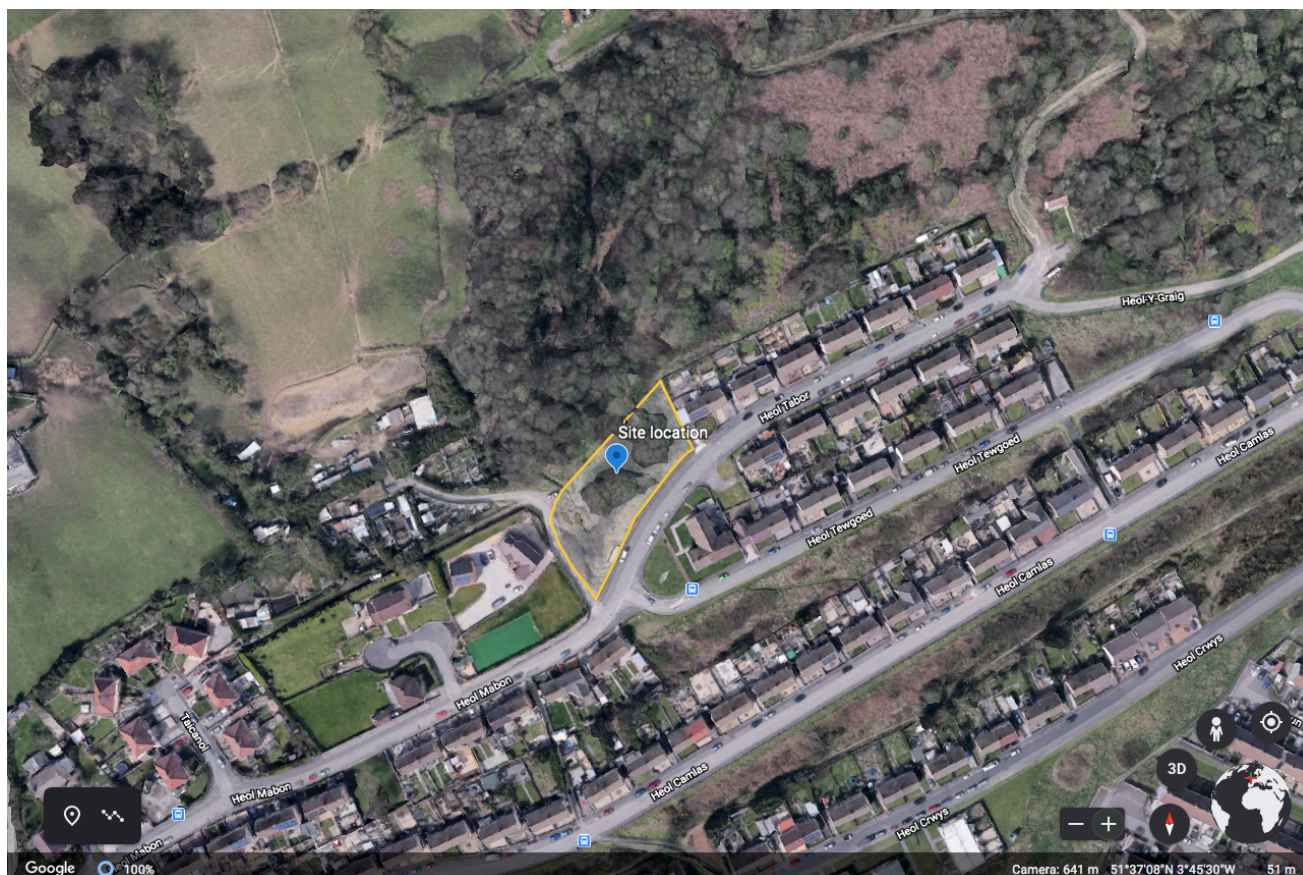


Figure 2. Key features on the Site.



Figure 3. Bunds at western end of site.



Figure 4. Drainage ditch along western boundary.



Figure 5. Drainage ditch on northern boundary.



Figure 6. Most of the site is bare ground with very sparse ruderal/grassy vegetation.



Figure 7. Himalayan balsam in south west corner of site.



Figure 8. Japanese knotweed towards the north west corner of the site.

