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365 Hale Road,  
Widnes,  
WA8 8TR.

On behalf of Charles Brierley-Jones.

## Ecological Appraisal

Report number:	WID/001	Author:	C. Leigh
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**Appendix 1 – Phase 1 Habitat plan**

**Appendix 2 - Key**

# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Leigh Ecology Ltd was commissioned to undertake a preliminary ecological assessment and bat scoping assessment of a site featuring several buildings at 365 Hale Road, Widnes.
- 1.2 The site comprises hard standing ground, with a large, corrugated style building which is currently used as a coach warehouse; the site also holds small offices/outbuildings and a car wash complex featuring several sheltered corrugated tin topped buildings.
- 1.3 The proposed development plans are to remove the current buildings, followed by the construction of a care home facility on site.
- 1.4 No trees of concern within the boundary were noted.
- 1.5 A bat scoping survey was undertaken within both building complexes; no features associated with bat roosting or signs of previous usage were noted within either complex.
- 1.6 The building is classified as **negligible bat potential**; therefore, no follow up surveys are required to continue with the current proposal plans.
- 1.7 The site offers very few amenity features or features such as hedgerow, with the boundary comprising hard materials throughout.
- 1.8 The river Mersey SPA is over 500m south of the site and is separated by residential housing and industrial estates.
- 1.9 Additionally the site offers no habitats for designated species of the Mersey SPA.
- 1.10 No ponds occur within 250m from the proposed site.
- 1.11 Proposals include the removal of the current buildings, with a subsequent replacement development planned for the site.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### Background

- 2.1 Leigh Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Charles Brierley-Jones to undertake an Ecological Appraisal of a site featuring a coach warehouse and car wash complex at 365 Hale Road (approx. National Grid Reference (NGR) SJ489846); refer to redline boundary shown on Figure 2.1 below.
- 2.2 Sites of biodiversity conservation value, habitats and species in UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPS) and protected species are material considerations in the planning process (Department for Communities and Local Government. 2012).
- 2.3 The study is documented in this report and includes the following:
1. Preliminary ecological baseline for the site;
  2. Protected mammals' assessment of the site;
  3. Potential ecological constraints to the development of the site; and
  4. Further ecological work necessary for a planning submission.
- 2.4 All Work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) Code of Practice.



Figure 2.1; Site location and extent

### 3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 A preliminary understanding of the ecological baseline of the development site (hereafter referred to as 'the site') was derived through desk study and site survey.

#### Site survey

- 3.2 An Ecological Assessment was undertaken on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2022 following Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) methodology (2010). This identified the habitat types on the site and the presence/absence of protected/notable species<sup>1</sup>. The results of the survey are detailed on a Phase 1 Habitat plan; refer to **Appendix 1**. Target notes were used to identify specific features of ecological interest; refer to **Appendix 2**.
- 3.3 Water bodies within 250m of the site were also identified from Ordnance Survey (OS) maps and through aerial photography.

#### Bat Surveys

##### Building and Trees Internal and External Inspection

- 3.4 An external inspection of the building and trees on site was undertaken; the primary objective of the survey was to locate any signs of bat activity, for example:
- Bat droppings;
  - Feeding remains;
  - Grease staining / urine marks;
- 3.5 As tree roosts are extremely difficult to locate, it is prudent to note all potential roost entrances, cracks, cavities, woodpecker holes, fissures, in order to undertake emergence surveys should there be an impact on the trees. The detailed survey of the building is covered later within this report.

#### Bird Surveys

- 3.6 Habitats that may contain bird nests were checked for current and historic nests and breeding activity. Bird activity occurring on site was also noted.

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<sup>1</sup> Notable species are those which hold a specific conservation status e.g., Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species, IUCN Red Data Species etc. Some notable species may also be legally protected.

## Protected Mammal Surveys

- 3.7 Any on site hedgerows and linear features were checked for feeding signs, prints, trails, droppings, holes etc., for species including badger *Meles meles*.



## 4 RESULTS

### Site survey

#### *Habitats within the survey area*

- 4.1 The locations of the habitats within the survey area are shown in **Appendix 1**, which should be read together with the accompanying Target Notes (TNs); refer to **Appendix 2** and Photographs within the text. Habitat descriptions are provided below; plant species are referred to using their English names.
- 4.2 A map showing the habitat areas is presented in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.3 The following paragraphs describe the habitats within the proposed site, providing a basic description of the most dominant species occurring.
- 4.4 The target site is a hard standing parcel, with a small car wash complex and a large, corrugated coach storage unit. Several smaller buildings are dotted around the site; small offices and toilet blocks all of single-storey configuration were noted.
- 4.5 The approximate site grid reference is SJ488844.
- 4.6 The proposed development will see the removal of the current buildings on site, and a subsequent development.



**Photograph 1:** A front view of the large corrugated storage/workshop building.





**Photograph 2:** A view of the building from the western face. The dominant land on site is hard standing concrete, with small unit features such as corrugated steel building units.



**Photograph 3:** An internal view of the large workshop/storage building. A worker on site stated that nesting wood pigeons frequent the site, but no active nests were noted.



**Photograph 4:** A view towards the car wash complex on site. Corrugated tin buildings feature as shelter for the work; none of these buildings offer any ecological value.



**Photograph 5:** A metal fence separates the car wash from the adjacent building on site. Small shrubs are found in these areas but are of no concern.

### **Site Boundaries**

- 4.7 The site boundaries across all sides comprise hard borders, predominantly stone walls and metal fencing.

### **Surrounding habitats**

- 4.8 The site is set within a dense commercial/residential environment, neighbouring large storage buildings, similar to the building on site, as well as recently developed residential areas.

### **Protected and notable species**

#### **Invertebrates**

- 4.9 No notable invertebrate species were recorded, and no suitable scrub or habitat is found on site.

#### **Amphibians**

- 4.10 Great crested newts are protected by Schedule 2 of the Convention of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended), which provide protection to both the individuals and the areas they use for rest, shelter or breeding. Great crested newts are also a UK BAP and LBAP priority species.
- 4.11 No ponds were identified within 250m of the site.

#### **Reptiles**

- 4.12 The wider landscape comprises dense commercial and residential land as previously mentioned, offering negligible habitat for reptiles.

#### **Birds**

- 4.13 The site offers some bird nesting habitat within the large, corrugated building, and previous wood pigeon usage has been noted within this subject building. Clear entry points are created between the roof and the exterior walls and should be considered during the removal process.

## Bats

- 4.14 No trees suitable for bat usage are found on site.
- 4.15 The main dwelling that occurs on site was subject to a full bat scoping survey (subject to BCT Guidance), which covered the whole of the building. No signs of bat usage were noted within the buildings, and both are thought to be of **negligible bat roost potential** due to their unsuitable configuration.

## Otters and Water Voles

- 4.16 The River Mersey is found over 500m south of the site, as well as Dutton Brook which sits around 250m north of the site. Both of these water bodies are cut off from the site by large commercial buildings and hard boundaries.

## Badgers

- 4.17 An assessment of potential badger *Meles Meles* activity on site led to the conclusion that the site is unsuitable for badger usage, with no passages created within the boundaries and no suitable environment on site or surrounding.

## Other mammals

- 4.18 Mammal species such as fox *Vulpes Vulpes* thrive in urban environments, and could visit the subject site and nearby, but are of no concern.

## **5 CONSTRAINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 The proposed development (within the red line site boundary as shown in Figure 2.1) will consist of the removal of the current buildings on site, followed by the subsequent development of a large care home facility.
- 5.2 Construction and post construction impacts are therefore possible upon both the habitats and species within and immediately adjacent to the site. Ecological constraints and recommendations with regard to any development of the site are discussed below.

### **Protected Sites**

- 5.3 The proposal site is an industrial site offering no habitats that will attract any of the designated species of the Mersey SPA and SSSI.
- 5.4 Additionally, the site is located some 500m from the Mersey, with the intervening urban habitat creating a barrier, therefore it is very unlikely that the proposed development will have a negative impact on the protected site.

### **Habitats**

- 5.3 The care home development will feature atop the current footprint of the site, with the removal of the current buildings on site.
- 5.4 No species rich hedgerows feature on site, no trees or natural habitat occurs on site.
- 5.5 No invasive species occur on site.
- 5.6 The large, corrugated building on site has previously featured nesting wood pigeons, as reported by a worker on site. No active nests were noted during the survey and another worker said that no recent usage has occurred within the past year.
- 5.7 Further specific species usage is discussed below.



## Protected species

### Reptiles

- 5.8 The proposal site is fragmented from any potential reptile habitats; therefore, it is unlikely that the proposal will impact on reptiles.

### Amphibians

- 5.9 No suitable Amphibian habitat was noted on site.

### Birds

- 5.10 Nesting woodpigeon have been noted previously within the large corrugated building.
- 5.11 Any potential removal of habitat associated with this development is regarded as relatively insignificant for birds given the abundance of similar habitat in the surrounding landscape. However, nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments) and it would be an offence to damage or destroy a nest or otherwise disturb a nesting bird.
- 5.12 The findings from the survey suggest that no nesting birds are currently found across the whole site. A worker had stated that no usage was noted within the past year.
- 5.13 Therefore, the removal of buildings on site is thought to be insignificant to local Populus, especially due to the abundance of similar, nearby abandoned corrugated buildings.

### Bats

- 5.14 All bat roosts are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, which defines these animals as European Protected Species. An offence would be committed if roosts, whether occupied or not, were destroyed, damaged or obstructed, or if bats themselves were harmed or disturbed.
- 5.15 The target buildings on site offer **negligible bat roosting** potential and are cut off from any ideal foraging routes for bats.

### Badger



5.16 No badger usage was noted and is highly unlikely due to the composition of the site.

#### Other mammals

5.17 Fox thrive within urban environments and could visit the site, but no signs were identified.

#### Summary

5.18 In conclusion, it is thought that proposal works can go ahead without constraints. Since nesting wood pigeons have been previously noted on site, workers should remain vigilant for any signs of new usage.

## 6 REFERENCES

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7 Appendices

Appendix 1 Phase 1 Habitat Map



## Appendix 2 - Key



Hard Standing



Building



Metal Fencing