

Site Assessment Survey

PROJECT TITLE: Proposed creation of two detached, two bedroom dormer bungalows with two car parking spaces per dwelling.

SITE ADDRESS: Ridgeway Hill, Newport, NP20 5DY.

DATE: 20th February 2025

The applicant is seeking planning consent to develop a parcel of land at Ridgeway Hill, Newport, NP20 5DY. The site consists of areas of recently disturbed rough semi-improved grassland. Planning permission is sought to build two detached, two bedroom dormer bungalows with garden areas and two car parking spaces per dwelling.

The site is centred at approximately ST 29644 88226. An aerial image showing the development site within the context of the wider complex is provided in Appendix 1 at the end of this report. This report focuses on the land and habitats within the site boundary only.

Site Location

The proposed development site is roughly rectangular in shape, however with the south west corner is cut out as the southern site boundary dog legs south and then back east to follow the boundary of the bungalow located immediately to the south. The site sits on the west side of Ridgeway Hill with the northern boundary of the site sitting directly opposite the Ridgeway Rise turning which heads east off of Ridgeway Hill. The community of Ridgeway is located on the north west outskirts of Newport City. Residential dwellings surround the proposed development site in all directions and are typically made up of detached and semi-detached bungalows.

The M4 motorway is the closest major road and is located approximately 750m away to the north west. The area surrounding the site is cross crossed by minor residential roads.

The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal is the closest significant watercourse and meanders roughly west to east, with the closest section of the canal approximately 662m away to the north west. Several small spring-fed streams are located between the community of Ridgeway and the Monmouthshire and Brecon canal to the north with the closest such stream located approximately 331m away to the north west.

There are several areas of standing water apparent on an OS map within the 1km data search radius to the north of the site. Most are located within Allt yr Yn Nature Reserve

with the closest located approximately 485m away to the north. The presence of ponds in nearby gardens cannot be discounted.

Green areas within and beyond the community of Ridgeway include; cemetery, hedgerows, tree lines, scrub, pockets of broad-leaved woodland, livestock grazing land, and golf course.

Desktop Study

A data search was requested from SEWBRc. The data search (LERC Reference: 0245-826) took a 1km buffer around a central point of the proposed development site. The site does not lie within or directly adjacent to a statutory protected site. Protected sites returned as part of the data search include:

- There is one Local - Statutory designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR) within 1km of the proposed development site. Allt yr Yn LNR is owned by Newport County Council and is located approximately 412m away to the north west at its closest boundary.
- There are five Local - Non-statutory designated Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC) within 1km of the proposed development site. Allt yr Yn SINC is the closest such site and is located approximately 187m away to the north west at its closest boundary.
- There are two Local - Non-statutory designated Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites (RIGS) within 1km of the proposed development site. Allt yr Yn Viewpoint Newport RIGS is the closest such site and is located approximately 270m away to the west at its closest boundary.
- There are eleven sites of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) within 1km of the site. These are broadleaf woodlands comprising mainly native tree and shrub species which are believed to have been in existence for over 400 years. The ground vegetation will reflect the naturalness of these woodlands and will frequently feature species which provide clear indication of long and continued woodland cover. They will have been woodland for centuries and contribute substantially to our natural and cultural heritage. The closest such area of woodland lies approximately 214m away to the north west at its closest boundary.
- There are two sites of Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site within 1km of the site. These are sites which are believed to have been continuously wooded for over 400 years. They have been replanted with native or non-native species, most commonly with conifers. They currently have a canopy cover of more than 50% non-native conifer tree species. They will have varying levels of remnant features of ASNW.

The closest such area of woodland lies approximately 257m away to the north west at its closest boundary.

- There are two NRW Priority Area (Woodland - PAWS) within 1km of the proposed development site. NRW Priority habitat areas are large scale areas which were prioritised for targeted conservation work, based on factors including the habitats within them. The closest such area of NRW Priority Area (Woodland - PAWS) is located approximately 257m away to the north west at its closest boundary.
- Approximately 40.17% of the 1km search area is designated as a B-Line. B-Lines are non-statutory protected sites which aim to restore and create wildflower habitats forming stepping stones that link existing wildlife areas together creating a network of habitats across the landscape benefiting not only pollinators but a host of other wildlife. The closest such area of B-Line is located approximately 41m away to the east at its closest boundary.

Given the localised and small scale nature of the development proposals it is highly unlikely any protected sites will be impacted as part of the proposed works.

Protected species records of note returned within 500m of the site include:

- Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) - Thirteen records were returned from the 1km data search, the closest record is located approximately 49m away to the south east and involved a field record.
- Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) - Twenty four foraging/commuting records were returned from the 1km data search, the closest record is located approximately 228m away to the north.
- Whiskered/Brandt's Bat (*Myotis mystacinus/brandti*) - Two foraging/commuting records were returned from the 1km data search, the closest record is located approximately 461m away to the north.
- Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) - Three foraging/commuting records were returned from the 1km data search, the closest record is located approximately 487m away to the north.
- Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*) - Five records were returned from the 1km data search, the closest record is located approximately 113m away to the north, this record appears to be an error as it mentions the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal which is located approximately 635m away to the north. The next closest records is located approximately 513m away to the north at Allt yr Yn Local Nature Reserve (LNR).
- Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*) - Twenty four records were returned from the 1km data search, the closest record is located approximately 441m away to the

north east, this record is clearly an error as it mentions the Grand Union Canal which is not located within Wales. The next closest records is located approximately 513m away to the north at Allt yr Yn Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

- Smooth Newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*) - Three records were returned from the 1km data search, the closest record is located approximately 303m away to the north west recorded to 1km resolution. The next closest records is located approximately 645m away to the north west at Allt yr Yn Local Nature Reserve (LNR).
- Birds - Species listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (WCA1.1) include; Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*) and Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*).
- Birds - Species listed under Section 7 (S7) of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (EWA 2016) include; Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) and Tree Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*).
- Moths - Species listed under Section 7 (S7) of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (EWA 2016) include; Blood-vein (*Timandra comae*), Buff Ermine (*Spilarctia luteum*), Centre-barred Sallow (*Atethmia centrargo*), Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet (*Xanthorhoe ferrugata*) and Pretty Chalk Carpet (*Melanthia procellata*).
- Plants - Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) - Fifteen records were returned from the 1km data search, the closest record is located approximately 328m away to the north west.

Protected species records of note returned beyond 500m and within the 1km data search include:

- Bats foraging/commuting - Daubenton's Bat (*Myotis daubentonii*) and Noctule Bat (*Nyctalus noctula*).
- Badger (*Meles meles*)
- Otter (*Lutra lutra*)
- Grass Snake (*Natrix helvetica*)
- Palmate Newt (*Lissotriton helveticus*).
- Birds - Species listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (WCA1.1) include; Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*), Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*) and Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*).
- Birds - Species listed under Section 7 (S7) of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (EWA 2016) include; Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*), Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*), House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), Linnet (*Linaria*

cannabina), Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*), Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and Willow Tit (*Poecile montanus*).

- Lepidoptera (Butterflies and Moths) - Species listed under Section 7 (S7) of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (EWA 2016) include; Cinnabar (*Tyria jacobaeae*), Dot (*Melanchra persicariae*), Dusky Thorn (*Ennomos fuscantaria*), Galium Carpet (*Epirrhoe galiata*), Ghost (*Hepialis humuli*), Grey Dagger (*Acronicta psi*), Knot Grass (*Acronicta rumicis*), Oak Hook-tip (*Watsonella binaria*), Rustic (*Hoplodrina blanda*), September Thorn (*Ennomos erosaria*), Shaded Broad-bar (*Scotopteryx chenopodiata*), Small Heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*) and Small Phoenix (*Ecliptopera silaceata*).
- Hymenoptera - Brown-banded Carder Bee (*Bombus humilis*) and Red-shanked Carder Bee (*Bombus ruderarius*).
- Plants - Red-tipped Cudweed (*Filago lutescens*).

Site Visit

Lee Gregory from Ecological Services attended site on 13th February 2025 to assess the potential ecological impacts of the proposed works. The site visit was completed during mid February which is outside of the optimal timeframe for undertaking such surveys. However it was still possible to draw broad conclusions to the habitats present within the development site boundary. Photographs of the site can be found in Appendix 2. **This report concentrates on the land within the proposed development site boundary only.**

The northern site boundary is an approximate 0.5m high brick wall on top of which runs an approximate 1.8m vertical lap **wooden fence** with wooden posts, this is the back garden fence of residential properties No. 44 and 46 Ridgeway Park Road located to the north. The western site boundary is an approximate 1.8m vertical lap **wooden fence** with concrete posts and gravel boards running along the ground, behind the fence to the west is the residential property of No. 7 Ridgeway Gardens. The southern site boundary is again an approximate 1.8m high vertical lap **wooden fence** with wooden posts. The boundary runs east from the south west corner of the site then dog legs to the south and then continues east, this last section of fence is approximately 1m high. This boundary follows the boundary of No.18 Ridgeway Hill which is located immediately to the south of the site boundary. The eastern site boundary is open along its length and runs parallel with the tarmac footpath which runs along the west side of Ridgeway Hill.

The proposed site gently slopes down to the east with the last couple of metres of the eastern boundary sloping steeply down to Ridgeway Hill street level.

The site has recently undergone site investigation works which has disturbed the majority of the vegetation across the site leaving much **bare earth**. A narrow strip of vegetation has been retained around the site boundaries and occasional patches across the site. From the remaining areas of vegetation it appears that the site was almost entirely composed of rough **semi-improved grassland** with the occasional **ornamental plant** and occasional **woody scrub** and **tall ruderal vegetation** species located around the site boundary fence. An online check of Google Street View with images dated from September 2023 shows that the site appears to have formerly consisted of semi-improved grassland and a young Willow (*Salix sp.*) sapling located close to the south east corner of the site.

Species recorded during the site visit of the 13th February 2025 include the following species; Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) - sapling, Broad-leaved Dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), Burdock sp. (*Arctium sp.*), Cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), Cock's-foot (*Dactylus glomerata*) - dominant, Common Vetch (*Vicia sativa*), Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), Creeping Cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), Dandelion (*Taraxacum agg.*), Forget-me-not sp. (*Myosotis sp.*), Garden Rose sp. (*Rosa sp.*), Garden Spurge sp. (*Euphorbia sp.*), Garden Strawberry (*Fragaria x ananassa*), Germander Speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), Ivy (*Hedera helix*), Lungwort (*Pulmonaria officinalis*), Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Passionflower sp. (*Passiflora sp.*), Ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*), Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), Smooth Sow-thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), White Clover (*Trifolium repens*), Willowherb sp. (*Epilobium sp.*), Wilson's Honeysuckle (*Lonicera nitida*) - sapling, Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*) and Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*). The cut down branches of a Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea*) approximately 2.5m long were placed along the southern boundary fence and likely belong to the Willow sp. visible on Google Street View.

A Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*) was heard singing in adjacent gardens during the site visit and a Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) was heard to fly low over the site.

Legislation

Birds

All breeding birds are protected under schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended. Under this Act it is an offence to:

- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.
- Intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

Enhanced protection is afforded to species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act, this additional protection makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

Reptiles & Amphibians

Reptiles such as Slow Worm (*Angus fragilis*), Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), Adder (*Vipera berus*) and Grass Snake (*Natrix natrix*) are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) from killing injury and sale. All four common reptiles are also listed as 'Section 7' species in Wales. In Wales Sand Lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Smooth Snake (*Coronella austriaca*), Adder, Grass Snake, Slow Worm and Common Lizard are listed in section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which makes them a key species to sustain and improve biodiversity.

The four widespread species of amphibian i.e. the Smooth Newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*), Palmate Newts (*Lissotriton helveticus*), Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*) and Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*), are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) by Section 9(5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This section prohibits sale of these species. Common Toad is listed in section 6 of The Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Potential Development Impacts

The proposed development will likely result in the loss of an area of rough semi-improved grassland. Indicative plans show that the majority of grassland will be lost through development. The habitats within the site are considered to have biodiversity value at a local level only.

- The habitats within the site boundaries in their current condition are considered to have low potential to be used by foraging birds, the grassland prior ground investigation works would likely have been more suitable. However the site is quite small and adjacent to a busy footpath and road used by residents and as such likely to be quite disturbed. The ground investigation disturbance has likely resulted in the loss of foraging habitat.
- No evidence of well used mammal paths through the site were noted during the site visit. The site is fenced on three sides and unfenced along its eastern boundary and is likely to be used by mammals such as Hedgehog for foraging purposes on occasion only.

- The small parcel of rough semi-improved grassland habitat within the site was thought to have negligible potential to support reptiles during the summer months. The 1km data search returned only one reptile record a Grass Snake recorded approximately 645m away to the north west dated 1999. The site is isolated from other areas of suitable reptile habitat and located in a highly urbanised area.
- Any additional external lighting, may impact on nocturnal species, such as bats and invertebrates using the site for feeding and commuting, however the site is in a highly urbanised area and already likely to be well illuminated by street lighting.

Biodiversity Enhancements & Green Infrastructure Considerations

Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (version 12), paragraph 6.2.5 requires Green Infrastructure considerations to be included with all planning applications. Development proposals must detail how green infrastructure considerations which are proportionate to the scale and nature of the plans are being provided.

Site investigation work has disturbed much of the ground on site and at present the majority of the site is bare earth with small areas of semi improved grassland. Assessments of the site via aerial mapping and street view photography show that the site was previously in a vegetated condition being mostly grassland. As per paragraph 6.4.16 of Planning Policy Wales (version 12) the biodiversity value of a site is based on the site condition prior to vegetation clearance works.

Green infrastructure features currently found within the site boundary are limited to rough semi-improved grassland. The site is fenced on three sides with just the eastern boundary being open, beyond the site boundaries are busy roads and buildings, therefore direct connectivity to surrounding habitat is limited. The current biodiversity value of the site is considered to be of local value only.

The proposed plans indicate that the majority of current habitats on site will be lost during development. Direct habitat loss implications within the development site can be limited if compensatory planting can be incorporated within the site plans.

The proposals must seek to improve the remaining habitat as part of the development proposals to increase the quality of green infrastructure and overall biodiversity value within the site. Development plans could seek to plant a range of native pollinator friendly species within the flower beds, additional tree planting and provide native hedgerow around and between the plot boundaries. The plans will also provide additional bat and bird boxes within the newly built residential buildings, providing additional habitat for such species not currently found at site.

Planning Policy Wales - Trees and Planning in Wales (January 2024 update) advises that compensatory planting for trees lost should be sought at a ratio of **3 for 1**. Compensatory

planning must be equivalent to the quality, environmental and of ecological importance of the tree(s) lost - this must be preferably onsite or immediately adjacent to the site. No mature trees are located within the site boundary.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Planning permission is sought to build two detached, two bedroom dormer bungalows, gardens and with two car parking spaces per dwelling. Given the potential impacts of the proposed development the below mitigation measures are proposed:

- Any external lighting required as part of the development proposals will be focused / directional lighting which is hooded or cowled to prevent light spill. The external lighting will be placed on a timer and motion activated. Sensitive lighting will reduce any negative impacts to nocturnal wildlife which use the area. This is particularly important for foraging bats and invertebrates that are likely to use the site.
- All lighting must meet recommendations in the BCT Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night <https://www.bats.org.uk/news/2023/08/bats-and-artificial-lighting-at-night-ilp-guidance-note-update-released>
- All excavations within the site will be securely covered over if left unattended. Any excavations that have a depth in excess of 0.5m and that are left open overnight will have a means of escape left for any mammals (e.g. hedgehog) that may fall into them. A wooden board or equivalent will be left from the bottom to the top of the hole at an angle no steeper than 45°. This will allow any mammal to escape and avoid increased stress from being trapped.
- Compensatory planting will be proposed within the site plans, these could include planting a range of native pollinator friendly species within the flower beds, additional tree planting of locally sourced native trees and creation of hedgerow planting around and between plot boundaries. Given the urban nature of the development site, some native species may not be suitable within the growing conditions available. Thus it is advised that species chosen for planting are beneficial to pollinators. **A detailed planting scheme will be required to support any future planning application for the site.**

The Environment Act (Wales) 2016 places a duty on competent authorities such as Newport City Council to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The below bullet points are some simple measures that could be achieved to enhance the biodiversity of the site. It is recommended at least 2 of the below measures are implemented :

- The provision of integrated bird boxes of varying design into buildings within the development site. Integrated boxes must be located as high as possible on the building and avoid south facing elevations to prevent overheating.
- The provision of integrated bat boxes into buildings within the development site. Integrated boxes must be located as high as possible on the building preferably on a south facing elevation to take advantage of the heat of the sun and be at least 2m away from any external light source.
- Gaps can be cut into any fencing proposed around the site to allow the movement of reptiles and small mammals across the area. 13cm x 13cm gaps will be cut every 3m along the fence line which encompass the site.
- The use of native species within the soft landscaping works on the site. Suitable long term management of soft landscaping also helps ensure spaces are useful to wildlife.

Best Wishes
Lee Gregory
Ecologist
Ecological Services Ltd

Signed: Lee Gregory Date: February 2025

Appendix 1 - Aerial Image of Development Site



Appendix 2 - Site Photographs



Proposed site viewing west from Ridgeway Hill



Proposed site viewing south west from Ridgeway Hill



Proposed site viewing north west from Ridgeway Hill



Northern boundary low brick wall and vertical wood lap fence above, viewing west



Western boundary vertical wood lap fence with concrete posts and gravel boards, viewing west



Southern boundary vertical wood lap fence, viewing south west



View south east across the site from the north west corner of the site



View south across the site from the north west corner of the site



View south east across the site from near the south west corner of the site



View north west across the site from the south east corner of the site



Approximate 2.5m long Grey Willow branches placed along the south site boundary fence



Google Street View of the site dated September 2023 with young Willow located to the left.