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Dear Rida,

RE: WWE24199 - St Illtyds Catholic High School, Cardiff, CF3 1XQ. Grid Ref: ST 22705 80426.

Wildwood Ecology were commissioned to undertake a site walkover of the above site, to update its current ecological status following a previous Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) undertaken by Wildwood Ecology in January 2023.

Introduction and purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide sufficient information for the local planning authority to assess the potential ecological impacts of any future development of the site, or to identify what further information is required before a full assessment can be made. There are currently no proposed works at the site.

This updated report aims to reassess the habitats present within the site boundary and provide recommendations for further survey work required to fully assess the ecological value of the

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site. This letter-style report should be read in conjunction with the previous PEA report by Wildwood Ecology (report ref: WWE22212 PEA FINAL) dated 16/05/2023.

The update survey was undertaken by Beth Lewis (Consultant Ecologist) on 29/10/24. The site and its surrounding landscape context are illustrated in the aerial image of the site (see **Figure 1** below). The weather conditions during the survey were good, with no rain and temperatures of 14°C.



Figure 1 – Aerial image of the site (red line shows the site boundary). Image used under licence (©2024 Google). Imagery date 06/11/2024.

Limitations and Assumptions

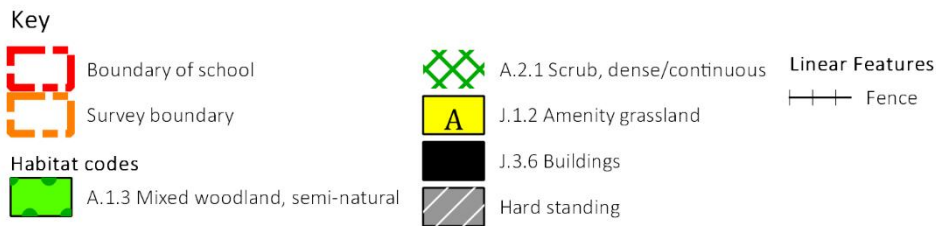
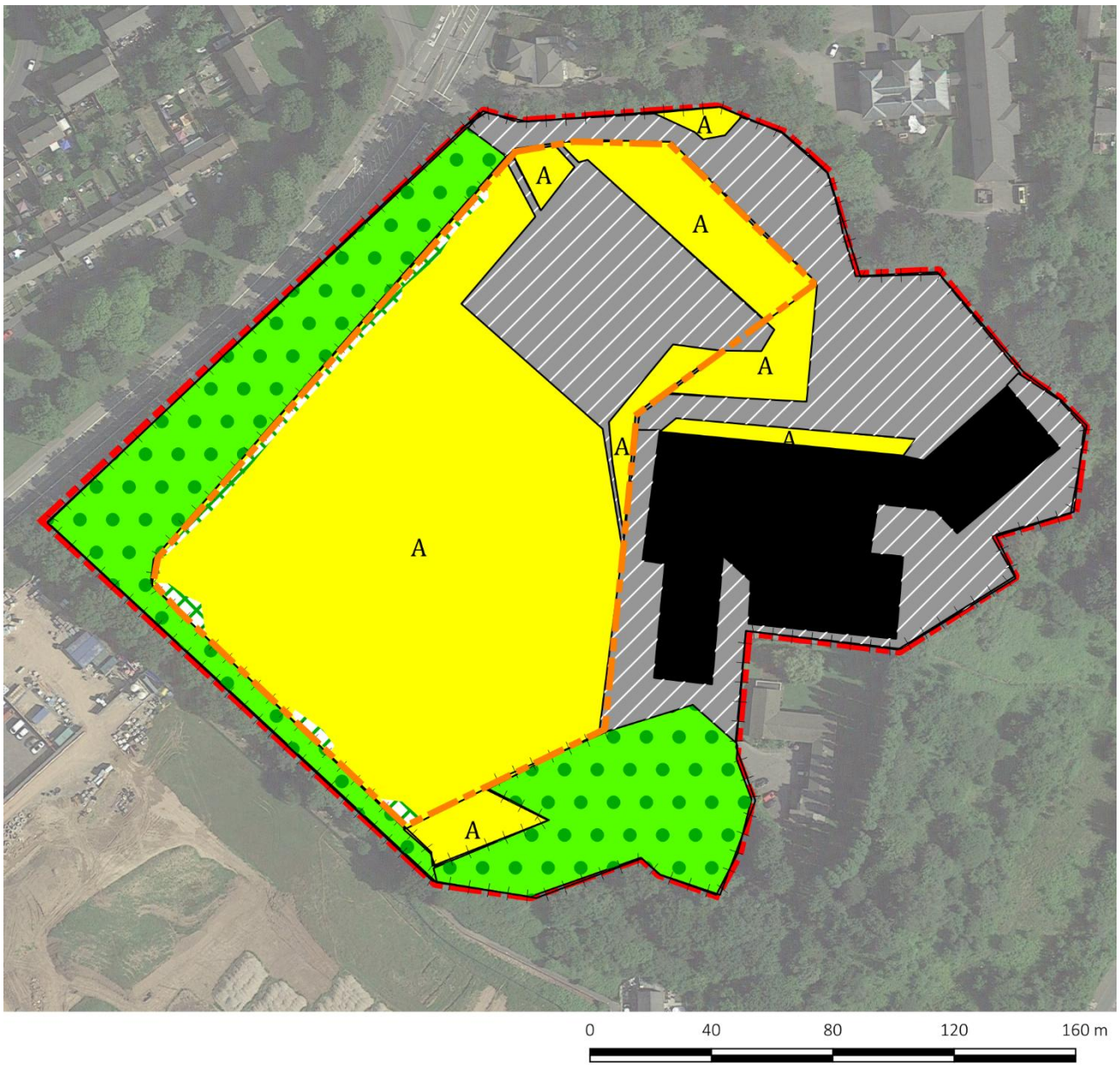
The field survey will not produce a comprehensive list of plants and animals as this will be limited by factors that influence their presence (e.g. activity and dormancy periods). An assessment can however be made of the habitats within the survey area, their nature conservation value and potential to support protected or priority species.

No other limitations were encountered, or assumptions made during the field survey, and it is considered that with the access gained and recording undertaken an accurate assessment of the site's ecological value has been made.

Summary of results from November 2022

The summary of the PEA undertaken in January 2023 is detailed below:

- The site did not fall within the Zone of Influence of any statutory or non-statutory designated sites.
- The site was classified according to the following habitat types: semi-natural mixed woodland, scrub (dense/continuous), amenity grassland, buildings, other habitat (hard standing).
- Semi-natural mixed woodland is listed as a Priority Habitat in Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and was classified as local ecological importance.
- The woodland edge was classified as low suitability for foraging and commuting bats, whilst trees within the woodland provided potential roosting opportunities for bats.
- Bird species may use the woodland and scrub onsite to nest.
- The mixture of woodland, scrub and grassland onsite provide suitable commuting, foraging and basking habitat for reptiles. Given the scope of the works, however, it was considered unlikely that the works would impact reptiles.
- The mixture of woodland, scrub and grassland onsite are likely to support hedgehog.
- Woodland, grassland and scrub provide suitable habitat for common invertebrate species.
- No invasive non-native species were identified onsite.



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Figure 2 - Habitat map from PEA survey in 2023.

Summary of Results from October 2024

A summary of the results of the walkover survey undertaken in 2024 are outlined below.

Walkover survey

Habitats

- The habitats on site were classified similarly in the 2023 PEA survey, with the exception of the semi-natural mixed woodland. The updated habitat plan can be seen at the end of this report.
- **Group of trees (formerly semi-natural mixed woodland)** – This habitat was largely unchanged since the PEA walkover in 2023. Following the 2024 walkover and consultation with ARBTS (the project arboriculturist), however, it has become clear that this habitat did not meet the criteria for a woodland in accordance with UK Government guidelines as the composition did not meet the age, stem size, height and condition to be classified as a woodland. Instead, this habitat should be classified as a G1 Tree Group. The species present included: ash, beech, black poplar, blackthorn, cherry, conifer sp., forsythia sp., grey willow, hazel, horsetail, Japanese knotweed, pedunculate oak, red cedar, Scots pine, turkey oak, sycamore. The habitat consisted of semi-mature trees and provides a good foraging, commuting, and sheltering habitat for wildlife, and therefore can be considered of **local ecological importance**.
- **Amenity grassland** – This habitat remained unchanged since the PEA walkover undertaken in 2023. The habitat was well managed, currently comprising sports pitches. Species present included: cock's foot, creeping buttercup, daisy, dandelion, meadow grass sp., plantain sp., white clover, Yorkshire fog. The forb (flowering plant) species are common for this habitat type, and the habitat is well represented within the surrounding area. Therefore, the amenity grassland is considered to be of **site ecological importance**.
- **Scrub (dense/continuous)** - This habitat remained unchanged since the PEA walkover undertaken in 2023 with the exception of patches of scrub which had encroached from the woodland through the fence, and onto the amenity grassland. Species present included: bramble, common nettle, holly. The scrub habitat is un-managed, and the species present are common for this habitat type. Despite minor changes, the scrub habitat onsite may provide suitable foraging and shelter opportunities for wildlife and is still considered to be of **site ecological importance**.
- **Arable** – An area in the south-east of site has been developed into a small allotment. This habitat is of limited value to biodiversity, however may have some features suitable for reptile and invertebrate species. Therefore, it can be considered to be of **site level importance**.
- **Buildings** – This habitat is unchanged since the PEA walkover undertaken in 2023. The school building was not subject to an assessment of its suitability for bats because it

will not be affected by the proposals. Therefore, an assessment of the buildings' ecological importance is not known and not considered necessary for the proposed works at the time of writing this letter update.

- **Other habitat (hard standing)** – This habitat is unchanged since the PEA walkover undertaken in 2023. The hardstanding and fence do not have any features that could support any protected and notable species. Therefore, they are of **negligible ecological importance**.

Priority and protected species

- Animal species identified onsite are as follows: black headed gull, carrion crow, Eurasian jackdaw, Eurasian magpie, Eurasian wren, European robin, herring gull, long-tailed tit, white wagtail.
- No other incidental signs of protected or priority species were identified during the update PEA walkover.
- **Bats** – The site provides the same opportunities for bats in the 2024 walkover survey as the 2023 survey. Although the school is located in an urban, built-up area, the group of trees along the south, south-west and north-west of the school provides suitable foraging and commuting habitat for bats. Furthermore, trees provide suitable habitat for roosting bats. Note that it was not possible to assess individual trees for features suitable for roosting bats. Should additional lighting spill result from the development, this may lead to adverse impacts to on foraging, commuting and roosting bats.
- **Nesting birds** – The site was provided the same opportunities for nesting birds in the 2024 walkover survey as the 2023 walkover survey. Scrub and woodland onsite provides suitable habitat for nesting birds onsite. Vegetation removal to facilitate the development may impact nesting birds.
- **Reptiles** – The site was provided the same opportunities reptiles in the 2024 walkover survey as the 2023 walkover survey. The mixture of woodland, scrub and open grassland provide suitable opportunities for foraging, commuting and basking reptiles. Vegetation removal to facilitate the development may impact reptiles.
- **Hedgehog** – Woodland, scrub and grassland onsite may provide suitable foraging, commuting and nesting habitat for hedgehog. Vegetation removal to facilitate the development may impact hedgehog.
- **Badger** – The site was provided the same opportunities for badger in the 2024 walkover surveys as the 2024 walkover surveys. The woodland habitat at the boundaries of the site and amenity grassland provides suitable foraging and potentially sett building habitat for badgers. However, the woodland is isolated from other woodland areas in the wider landscape. Therefore, there is unlikely to be adverse impacts to badger as a result of the development.
- **Otter** – As per the 2023 walkover survey, there was no suitable habitat for otter onsite.
- **Invertebrates** – The site was provided the similar opportunities for invertebrates in the 2024 walkover survey as the 2022 walkover survey. The grassland, trees and scrub comprise several flowering species that could provide nectar sources for invertebrates.

Given the scope of the works, however, it is unlikely that the development will have an adverse impact on invertebrate populations onsite.

Invasive species

- A single stand of Japanese knotweed (Target Note 2) was identified onsite. This was not identified on the previous PEA survey.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Designated sites

- The site is not within the Zone of Influence of any designated or non-designated sites.

Habitats

- All habitats onsite, aside from one, are consistent with those in the previous PEA survey in 2023.
- The habitat previously described as woodland is now described as a G1 Tree Group, as it does not meet the UK Government criteria to be classified as a woodland.

Protected species

- A Precautionary Working Methods Statement should be implemented in order to ensure that there are no adverse impacts to protected species as a result of the works.
- If habitats suitable for nesting birds are to be removed (scrub and woodland), then any vegetation clearance will take place outside of the bird nesting season. In the event that clearance work has to be undertaken during the nesting season (generally from 1st March until 31st August, although birds are known to nest outside of these dates in suitable conditions), a nesting bird check will be required and must be carried out by a suitably qualified person.
- Should there be additional lighting, Night-time Bat Walkovers and static monitoring surveys will be required in order to inform a sensitive lighting strategy.

Invasive species

- Japanese knotweed should be removed from site by a specialist contractor.
- No ground breaking works should be undertaken within 7m of any Japanese knotweed.

Biodiversity Enhancement

Local Authorities have a duty (known as the 'Biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty') under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions.

Where possible, the existing onsite habitat should be retained to ensure that habitats and species that rely on them are not adversely affected by the development. Native species of local provenance, UK-propagated and raised, should be used for any new planting on the site to support The Action Plan for Pollinators in Wales, 2013 (<http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/130723pollinator-action-plan-en.pdf>).

In order to achieve Net Benefit for Biodiversity, the area highlighted in yellow on the should be used to develop an ecotype between the tree group in the south of site and the amenity grassland onsite. This should include:

- Implementing a gradual mowing and cutting regime, which gets less frequent towards the tree group. A 7m buffer should be implemented, with the closest 2m to the tree group being cut once a year, the next 3m being cut twice a year and the third 2m being cut three times a year.
- Encouraging the growth of shrub species at the tree group edge by selectively managing vegetation.
- Creating deadwood and brash piles within the ecotone in order to provide opportunities for invertebrates and reptiles.

Survey Images (29/10/24)



Figure 3 –Japanese knotweed onsite (Target Note 2)



Figure 4 – Group of trees onsite.



Figure 5 – Group of trees onsite.



Figure 6 – Allotment area in south-east of site.

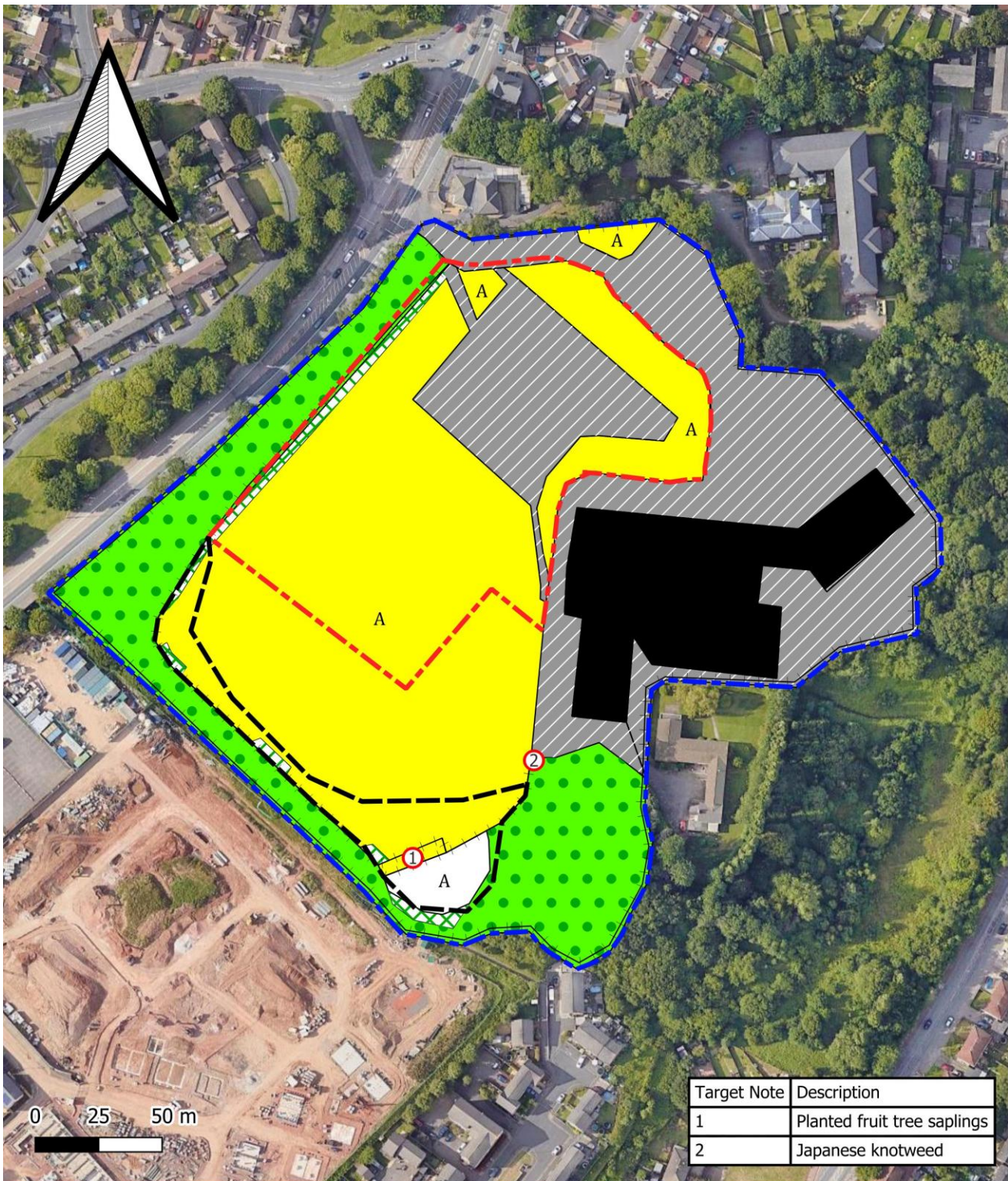


Figure 7 – Existing hard standing and amenity grassland onsite.



Figure 8 – Group of trees to the south of site.

2024 Habitat Plan



Target Note	Description
1	Planted fruit tree saplings
2	Japanese knotweed

- Potential areas for biodiversity enhancement
 - Works boundary
 - School boundary
 - Target notes
 - linear
 - Fence
- Habitats**
- Tree Group
 - A.2.1 Scrub, dense/continuous
 - J.1.1 Arable
 - J.1.2 Amenity grassland
 - J.3.6 Buildings
 - Hard standing