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Ecology Report

Proposed Belturbet Community, Enterprise & Tourism Hub

Document Details

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Contents

1. Introduction

This report details the finding of an ecological survey and assessment of a premises at Main Street (also known as Butler Street, Belturbet, Co. Cavan. The purpose of these is to provide a description of baseline ecology at this site and to detail any potential impacts upon this site arising from the proposed development of a community hub at this location. The proposed development is detailed below.

2. Description of Proposed Development

The proposed project involves the partial demolition works and partial retention, refurbishment and extension works to the existing building on Main Street (Butler Street) Belturbet, partial retention, and extension works at ground, first floor and to the rear to the existing building on Patrick Street and a new multi-purpose building at rear of buildings on Main Street and Patrick Street.

The proposed development will consist of:

Existing Dinkins Bakery Building:

- Demolition of rear extensions
- refurbishment and upgrade works to original two storey structure
- new build two storey extension

All above to provide community, youth, enterprise multi-purpose spaces and ancillary facilities.

New Multi-Purpose Building:

• New build single storey multi-purpose space

Existing Building at Patrick Street:

Partial retention of walls to existing two storey building, extension at ground, first floor and to the rear, demolition of roof structure, new build two storey extension, all to provide community, enter- prise, meeting, offices, multi-purpose spaces and ancillary facilities, new internal and external signage.

Site Works will Include:

Site development works, archway access from Butler Street and Patrick Street, works to existing boundaries, hard and soft landscaping, external multi use spaces, lighting, bin storage, bicycle parking, and all associated site services above and below ground.

3. Methodology

The site under study was surveyed during daylight hours on 31 January 2024. The site was surveyed as per guidelines given by Smith et al (2011) and the JNCC (2010). Habitats were classified as per Fossitt (2000). A bat survey of the accessible areas of the building was carried out as per guidelines given by the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, 2016). Impact assessments were made as per the NRA (2009).

4. Field Study

The site under survey is within the urban area of Belturbet, Co. Cavan. The site extends (north-south) between Butler Street and Patrick Street. The location is not within a site designated for conservation of nature. The nearest such site is Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC (Site Code 000007) which is located approximately 170m from the site proposed for development. None of the qualifying interests of this SAC occur within the zone of influence of the proposed development.

A very limited amount of habitats occur within the area proposed for development. These are:

Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3)

Much of the area under survey would conform to this habitat type, being already developed as a dwelling and a commercial premises and storage. This is a typically species-poor habitat type as it is highly modified and relatively few plant species would occur here. Plants such as Groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*) and Ivy-leaved Toad-flax (*Cymbalaria muralis*) are among these. It should be noted that while this habitat is species-poor for plants, it may offer habitat for both bird and bat species – see below.

Recolonising Bare Ground (ED3)

Much of the outdoor areas of the property would conform to this habitat type. This is also a species-poor habitat which contains species such as Prickly Sow Thistle (*Sonchus asper*), Willow-herb (*Epilobium* sp.) and Mosses. Buddleia (*Buddleja davidii*, also known as Butterfly Bush) and Himalayan Honeysuckle (*Leycesteria formosa*) both occur here. These are invasive species – see below. Other species here are Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg.), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*)

Flowerbeds and Borders (BC4)

A small proportion of the outdoor area of the property was previously devoted to flowerbeds. These contain some non-native species such as Pyracantha and Rose but have also been overtaken by native species that include Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) and grasses.

A very limited Fauna may be expected to occur within the site proposed for development. This is dicussed below:

Terrestrial Mammals (non-volant)

No evidence of any protected mammal species was recorded.

Bats

A brief search of the buildings was undertaken for evidence of bat habitation. No evidence was found. It was noted that several areas of the newer buildings were damp and otherwise unsuitable for bat habitation. However, a search of the attic space was not carried out. This must be completed before the commencement of any works here.

Birds

No evidence of bird nesting activity was observed during surveys. No birds of conservation concern (Gilbert et al, 2021) were recorded. The corpse of a rook was found in an upper room. It is likely that this bird became trapped within the structure. However, it should be noted that surveys were carried out outside the bird nesting season (March-August inclusive). The buildings offer habitat for species such as Swift, House Martin and Swallow. Although none of these species nor evidence thereof was recorded, a dedicated bird nesting activity survey should be carried out before the commencement of any works here.

Other Groups

No evidence of nor habitat suitable for other groups of protected species (e.g. Invertebrates, Amphibians) was found within the site.

Invasive Species

2 no. invasive species were recorded. These were Buddleia (*Buddleja davidii*, also known as Butterfly Bush) and Himalayan Honeysuckle (*Leycesteria formosa*). Both of these are described as *Medium Impact* invasive species (National Biodiversity Data Centre). However, these are not subject to legal control and may be disposed of as per other garden/horticultural waste. Care should be taken not to cause the spread of any such species. A dedicated method statement should be drawn up in order to inform the contractor on methodology for this disposal.

5. Ecological Impact Assessment

The potential for ecological impacts may be summarised as per the table below. Impact assessment follows CIEEM (2018)

Ecological Feature	Evaluation	Nature of Impact	Impact Significance	Duration & Likelihood
Bare ground	Low local	Loss of habitat	Negligible	Likely /Permanent
Recolonising bare ground	Low local	Loss of habitat	Negligible	Likely /Permanent
Flowerbeds & Borders	Low local	Loss of habitat	Negligible	Likely /Permanent
Bats	High local	Loss of potential roost site	Moderate adverse	Unlikely/Permanent
Birds	High local	Loss of potential nest site	Moderate adverse	Unlikely/Permanent

6. Impact Mitigation

Measures that may be put in place in order to mitigate the above impacts are given in the table below:

Ecological Feature	Nature of Impact	Recommended Mitigation Measures
Bare ground	Loss of habitat	None required. Dedicated areas for planting with plants for pollinators will offset any loss of biodiversity.
Recolonising bare ground	Loss of habitat	None required. Dedicated areas for planting with plants for pollinators will offset any loss of biodiversity.

Flowerbeds & Borders	Loss of habitat	Dedicated areas for planting with plants for pollinators will offset any loss of biodiversity.
Bats	Loss of potential roost site	Building to be searched in entirety prior to any works. Bat activity survey of area to be carried out prior to any works. Replacement bat roost habitat (bat roosting boxes) to be incorporated into completed design.
Birds	Loss of potential nest site	Bird nesting activity survey of structures to be carried out prior to any works. Replacement bird nesting habitat (bird nesting boxes and/or Swift boxes) to be incorporated into completed design.

7. Conclusion

The premises under survey is not within a site designated for conservation of nature. The overall assessment of habitats occurring here is that these are of low local significance. No significant impacts may therefore arise from the loss of these. The structures on site offer bat roost habitat and it has not yet been determined whether a bat roost occurs here. Dedicated building searches for bat roosting activity will therefore be required. It is also recommended that a bat activity (detector) survey is carried out during a suitable season (April-October). While no evidence of nesting of any bird species was noted, surveys were carried out outside the bird nesting season and are therefore sub-optimal. Further bird surveys are therefore recommended within the bird nesting season. 2 no. invasive species occur within the site. These are not subject to legal controls. However, these should be disposed of correctly.

Overall, no ecological impacts of any significance may be expected from the completion of the project under survey.

9. References

CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater and Coastal 2nd Edition. The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

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Appendix A: Site Layout

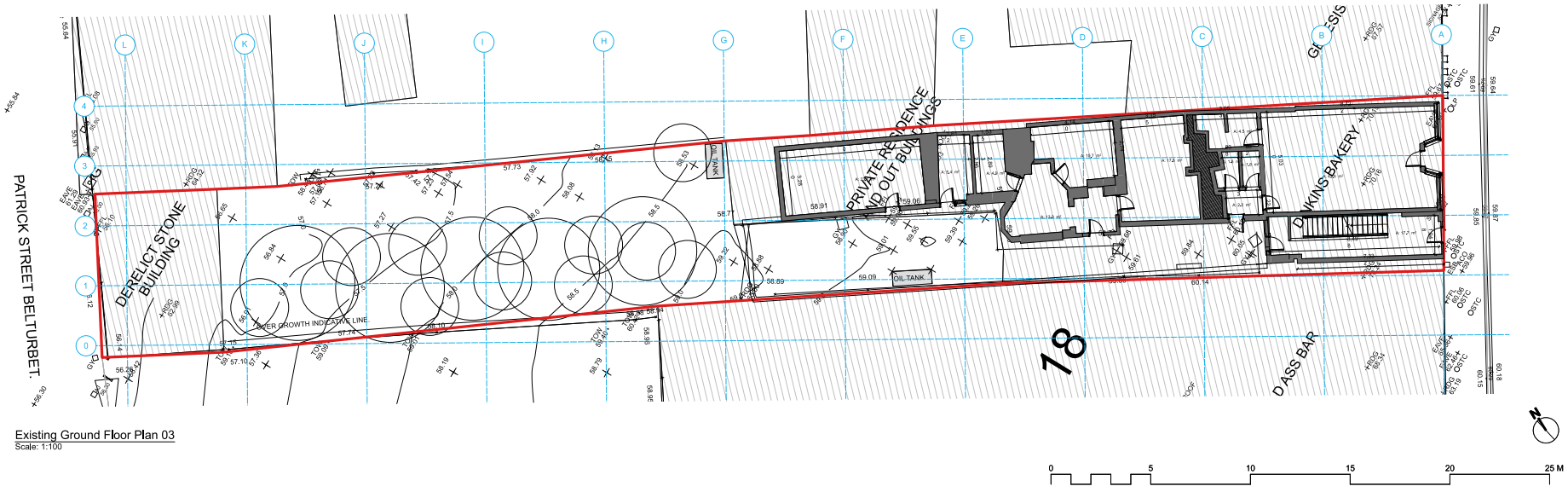

Fig. 1. Existing Ground Floor Plan. Drawing by Cooney Architects

Appendix B: Pictures

Fig. 1 Buddleja on recolonising bare ground to rear of premises

Fig. 2 Himalayan Honeysuckle beside wall of extension to rear of property.

Fig. 3 **Bare ground and recolonising bare ground behind the premises.**

Fig. 4 Overgrown flowerbed to rear of the premises.

Fig. 5 Roof of rear of structure showing possible ingress points for bats and birds.

Fig. 6 Evidence of damp on ground floor ceiling. This may make building less suitable for bat species.