

Construction Phase - Reptile Mitigation Strategy

PROJECT TITLE: Demolition of Existing School & Construction of a New School Building Within the Existing Site

SITE ADDRESS: Bishop Hedley High School, Gwaunfarren Road, Penydarren, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 9AN

PLANNING REF: P/23/0131

DATE: 26th September 2023

Planning consent has been granted for the demolition of the current school buildings, the creation of new school buildings and additional school facilities and landscaping within the proposed site boundary. Planning consent has been granted (ref: P/23/0131) and a number of ecological conditions have been added to the decision notice. Relevant ecological conditions include condition 18.

Condition 18:

No development shall commence, including any works of demolition until an Ecological Management Plan (EMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include:

- a plan illustrating areas of onsite habitats to be retained, protected and enhanced;
- a Reptile Mitigation Strategy;
- a Bat Method Statement;
- an implementation programme including the phasing of works; and
- details of the qualified person who will provide ecological supervision.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

A separate Bat Method Statement has been completed to support the discharge of condition 18. The Bat Method Statement will then be used for any future bat licence application made to Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

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 the Slow-worm, Common lizard, Adder and Grass Snake are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981(as amended). They are protected from killing, injuring and sale. They are protected from killing, injuring and sale. They are also listed in section 6 of The Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The four widespread species of amphibian i.e. the smooth and palmate newts, common frog and common toad, 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.

Habitat Retention and Protective Measures

The majority of habitats within the site boundary will be subject to some level of change as part of the development proposals. The Tree Protection Plan within the Arboricultural Report by ArbTS shows all areas of retained vegetation and the location of Tree Protection Fencing. Areas of habitat retained are mainly along the eastern edge of the northern portion of the site and along the northern boundary of the southern portion of the site.

Details of soft landscaping for the site can be found in Landscape Genral Arrangement, drawing number BCA-ATK-XX-XX-DR-LA-423001, Rev P04, dated 16/02/2023 and Site Wide Planting Plan, drawing number 5202184-ATK-XX-DR-LA-423013, Rev P01, dated 16/02/2023 both issued by Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd. The soft landscaping plans detail area of habitat to be created and enhanced.

A temporary construction compound has been agreed for the duration of the development works. All office cabins, parking, materials and machinery will be stored at the construction

compound. The construction compound will be located to the west of Gabon Uchaf Road to the south of the rugby pitch.

Reptile Protective Measures

A Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) of the entire school site was completed on the 14th July 2022. The habitats within the site include buildings, tarmac hardstanding, areas of paving, small blocks of woodland, tall ruderal vegetation, scattered trees, hedgerow, short perennial vegetation, ornamental planting and mown semi improved grassland. The vast majority of the development site is considered to have limited potential for use by reptiles, for example the buildings, tarmac and areas of paving do not provide cover for reptiles from predation or foraging areas. The semi improved grassland is well maintained and regularly mown as part of the school grounds. The sward is short and even and also has limited potential for use by common reptile species.

The hedgerows, ornamental planting, tree lines, tall ruderal vegetation and small areas of woodland across the site have the potential for use by reptiles during the summer months for commuting / foraging and winter months for hibernation. Any work to hedgerows, ornamental planting, tree lines, tall ruderal vegetation and small areas of woodland across the site will need to consider impacts to reptiles. The below measures will be implemented during the construction works on site:

- All site contractors will be given a toolbox talk which covers the legal protection given to reptiles, what they look like, where they may be found, and what to do if reptiles are found on site. Information on reptiles will be included within the site induction pack.
- All vegetation cutting in the northern half of the site will start at the western boundary and work eastwards.
- All vegetation cutting in the southern half of the site will start at the southern boundary and work northwards.

Vegetation Clearance – Grassland and Tall Ruderal Vegetation

- Tall ruderal vegetation and any areas of longer grassland will be cut in stages and undertaken during the summer months when reptiles are active and likely to relocate of their own accord.
- **First Stage Cut** - vegetation will be cut, using hand tools or an adjustable height flail, to a height of between 100-150mm. The cut material will be raked and removed from the site to avoid potential future colonisation by reptiles. The cut material must be removed the same day it is cut. Work area must be left for 24hrs once the first stage cut is completed.

- An ecologist will attend site once the first stage cut is completed to ensure all areas of suitable vegetation have been cut and the material removed from site. Ecological supervision of strimming work is not recommenced in this instance.
- **Second Stage Cut** - vegetation will be cut to ground level (a maximum height of 50mm) and the arisings raked and removed from the site as above. Any reptiles or other fauna will be treated as above.
- An ecologist will attend site once the second stage cut is completed to ensure all areas of suitable vegetation have been cut and the material removed from site. Ecological supervision of strimming work is not recommenced in this instance.
- Any herptiles present should naturally move away of their own accord due to the disturbance from cutting. However, in the unlikely event that any reptiles or other fauna are encountered during this operation all cutting work will stop and the on call Ecologist will be consulted. Reptiles will either be carefully collected and moved away to the retained vegetation along the eastern boundary of the northern half of the site or ruderal vegetation along the southern boundary of the southern half of the site or be allowed to do so of its own accord.

Vegetation Clearance – Ornamental Planting, Hedgerows and Trees

- **First Stage Cut** - The first stage cut of dense ornamental planting, trees and hedgerow will be required outside of the bird nesting season. Trees, hedgerow and ornamental planting will be cut to a height of 0.5m between the months of **September to February inclusive**. All cuttings will be collected and removed from the site to prevent future colonisation by birds and or reptiles.
- Ground disturbance / works which affect ornamental planting, trees and hedgerow will be completed outside of the reptile hibernation period which is weather dependent but is generally considered to be October to March inclusive. Any ground disturbance works must avoid the hibernation period when such animals are torpid and cannot move away from machinery. **Providing the local temperatures are above 9°C for at least 5 consecutive days and there is no snow or frosts, site clearance works in March may be allowed.** However, the project will aim to start groundworks between April and September inclusive in any given year.
- **Second Stage Cut** - tree and hedgerow roots will be grubbed up using a toothed bucket of a JCB or an appropriately sized digger. The roots will be removed under ecological supervision and any reptiles found will be captured and moved to adjacent habitat. The roots systems will be removed slowly and gently to allow any reptiles present to escape. All roots will then be removed from the proposed development site.

- Once all suitable vegetation has been cleared from within the site boundary, the construction site footprint must remain in a vegetation free state. This will help to reduce the likelihood of reptiles using the site while construction works are underway.

Timing of Work

The overall construction programme is expected to be of the order of 167 weeks. An indicative summary programme appears below for guidance only. Given the length of time the programme of works covers it is not possible to give definitive periods of time when soft landscaping work will be undertaken. It is anticipated that landscaping to the north of the primary school will be completed 27th May 2025, to the east of the primary school by 22nd July 2025, to the east of the secondary school by 17th September 2025 and the south of the secondary school by 10th December 2025.

Workstage	Indicative Program
Overall duration:	167 calendar weeks
Main School building:	124 calendar weeks
Sports Hall & External works:	43 calendar weeks
Start on Site:	27th November 2023
Handover Main building:	13th April 2026
Handover externals:	4th February 2027
Hard / Soft Landscaping Completion - Northern Site	10th December 2025
Hard / Soft Landscaping Completion - Southern Site	Feb / March 2027

Ecological Supervision

Ecological supervision of the any work which impacts protected species or habitats will be undertaken by Ecological Services Ltd. The main point of contact for the project from Ecological Services Ltd will be:

Ash Harris
Director
Ecological Services Ltd

Phone: 07305143857
ash@ecologicalservices.wales

Best Wishes

Ash Harris
Director

Signed: *Ash Harris* Date: November 2023

Reference List

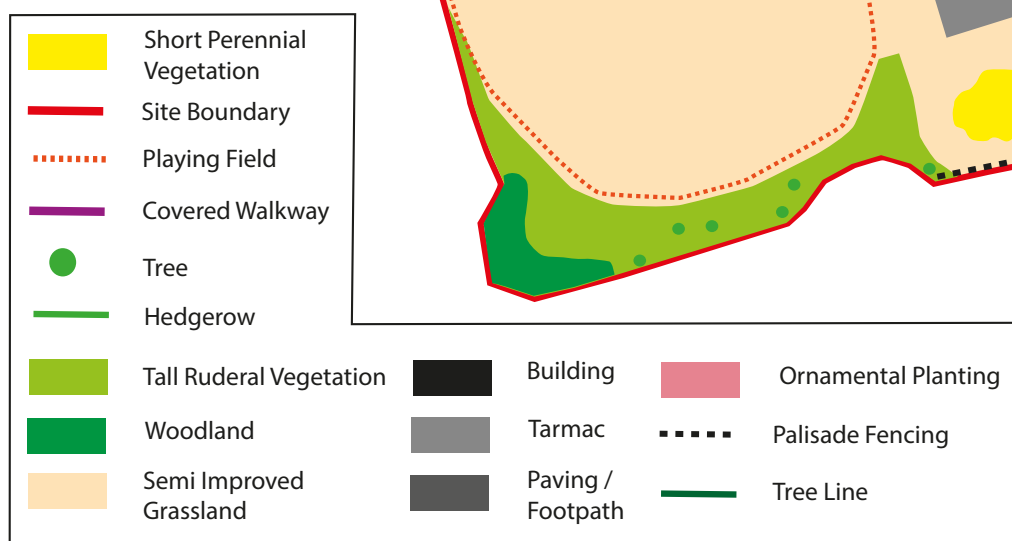
- ArbTS 'Arboricultural Report including Tree Survey Data & Tree Constraints Plan, Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Method Statement' 24th April 2023
- Ecological Services Ltd ' Ecological Impact Assessment; Bishop Hedley School, Merthyr Tydfil' 9th October 2023 V4.0
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- Ecological Services Ltd ' Preliminary Ecological Assessment & Bat Survey; Bishop Hedley Catholic School' 31st May 2023 V3.0

Appendix 1 - Habitat Map

BISHOP HEDLEY SCHOOL, MERTHYR
TYDFIL

Habitat Map

July 2022



Appendix 2 - Construction Compound

