PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

LAND AT CANAL SIDE HOUSE, MOUNT PLEASANT, ABERFAN

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

2025

ISSUE 1VC

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LAND TO THE SOUTH OF CANAL SIDE HOUSE, ABERFAN

Ecological Assessment

Document control

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Contents Amendment Record

This report has been issued and amended as follows:

Issue	Revision	Description	Approved by	Date
1	VC	Minor Amendments and reptile survey	BE	27/09/25

CONTENTS

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

A preliminary ecological assessment was undertaken of land to the south of Canal Side House, Pleasant View, Aberfan in order to put forth an application for two dwellings on the site.

The work involved a phase 1 habitat survey to categorise the habitats present, an assessment of the site's ability to provide suitable habitats for protected species and recommendations for further survey and actions if considered necessary. The site appeared to originally be scrub/young trees, the client has recently bought the land as a clear plot. The site was used for storage/access for the adjacent housing development.

The habitats on site comprise previously cleared land with early successional vegetation.

There are no structures/trees suitable for roosting bats. It is possible that bats will forage and commute over the site.

There is no vegetation on site suitable for dormice.

There were no ponds on or immediately adjacent to the site which could be suitable for use by breeding great crested newts (or other amphibians). There are records within the data search, however, these records are isolated by roads and infrastructure. . It is unlikely that great crested newt will be affected by the proposals.

No evidence of badger activity was recorded within or immediately adjacent to the site boundary. It is possible that badgers will use the site for foraging, however, no evidence of badger was found throughout. It is unlikely that badgers will use the site for sett building due to lack of evidence at the site.

There is no suitable breeding bird habitat on site. It is unlikely that the site will be used by ground nesting species due to disturbance and the small size of the site.

The site provides reptiles with potential habitat for foraging, basking and sheltering purposes, particularly around the interface of the site. There may be some limited hibernation habitat in the rubble piles on the site. A viable mitigation strategy will be required for reptiles.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OBJECTIVE

The objectives of this report are to:

- identify the habitats present on the site;
- identify the potential for protected species to be present on site;
- using the information gathered to determine whether there may be any impacts (both positive and negative) on protected species present;
- provide recommendations for further survey as necessary; and
- suggest outline mitigation and enhancement ideas and principles

1.2 METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives set out above, the following actions were taken:

- Field based assessments in respect of
    1. Habitats;
    2. Protected species, primarily:
        i. Bats;
        ii. Dormice;
        iii. Otters;
        iv. Amphibians (particularly great crested newt);
        v. Badgers
        vi. Reptiles; and
        vii. Breeding birds

The impact assessment has been undertaken by ecological feature rather than by section i.e. each subject is discussed and assessed separately and summarised in conjunction with the others.

1.3 SITE DESCRIPTION

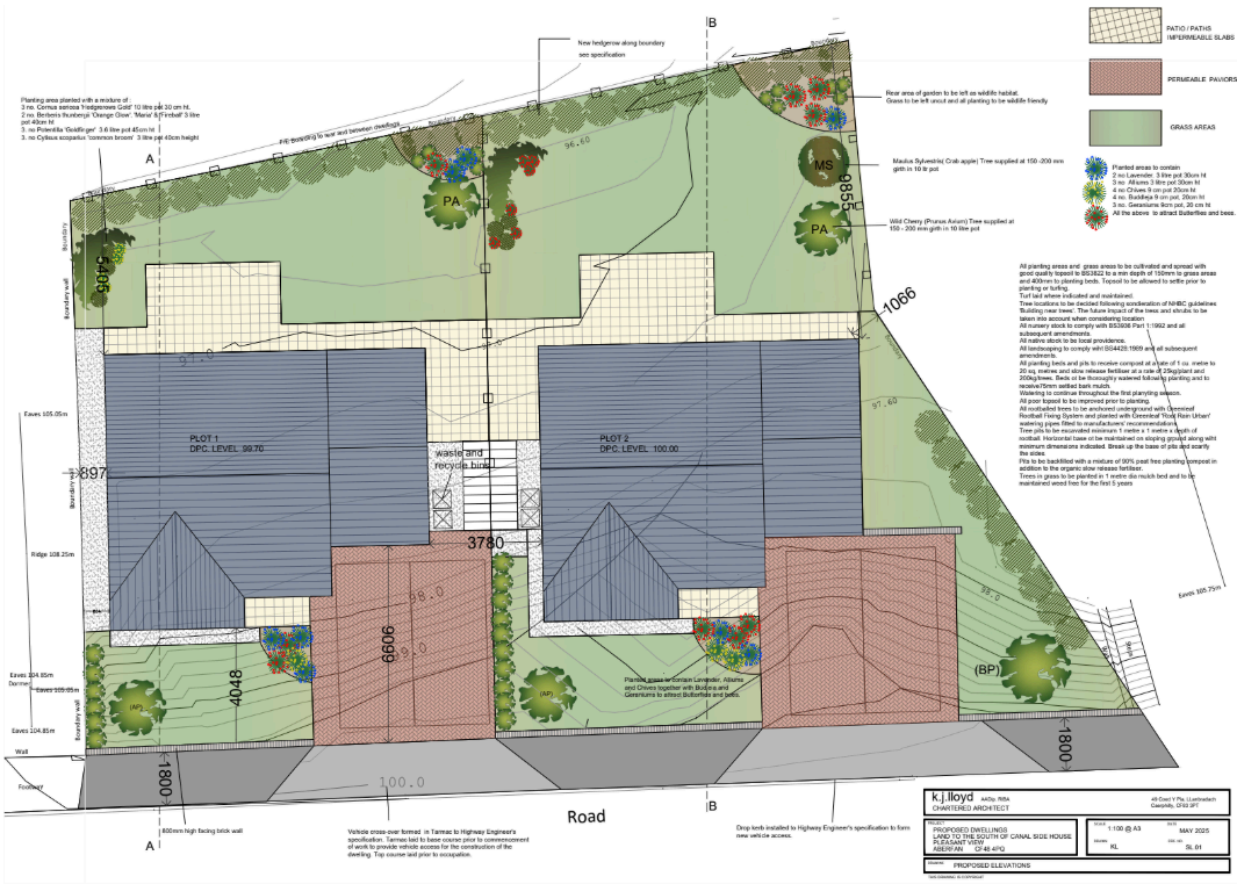
The red line development site boundary is located on land to the south of Canal Side, Mount Pleasant, Aberfan, Merthyr Tydfil.

The site has been cleared with early successional vegetation beginning to colonise.

To the east of the site is the wooded Taff Trail. The site is surrounded by residential dwellings in all other directions. There is good connectivity to the wider landscape via the Taff Trail.

1.4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

It is proposed to erect a pair of detached dwellings.



1.5 STUDY AREA

The field survey looked at the red line development area itself and up to 20m from the site boundaries wherever possible.

The biological records search covered a search radius of 1000m from the centre of the development site for protected sites (international, national and local), protected and priority species, other species of conservation concern and locally important species. A buffer of 1000m was applied to locally designated sites.

2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTERNATIONAL

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 known as the "Habitats Regulations" transpose the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (the Habitats Directive) into UK law. The Directive is the means by which the European Union meets its obligations under the Bern Convention. The most vulnerable and rarest of species are afforded protection under this legislation. The species listed on Schedule 2 of the Habitats Regulations are termed "European Protected Species" and are afforded the highest levels of protection and command strict licensing requirements for any works which may affect them. The species include all British bats, Otter, Dormouse and Great Crested Newt. They are fully protected against disturbance, killing, injury or taking. In addition, any site regarded as their "breeding site or resting place" is also protected. It is generally regarded that the site is protected whether the animals are present or not.

The Habitats Regulations clearly outline the role of Planning Authorities in the implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives; by stating [Section 10]

10.—(1) .....a competent authority must take such steps in the exercise of their functions as they consider appropriate to secure the objective in paragraph (3), so far as lies within their powers.

(3) The objective is the preservation, maintenance and re-establishment of a sufficient diversity and area of habitat for wild birds in the United Kingdom, including by means of the upkeep, management and creation of such habitat, as appropriate, having regard to the requirements of Article 2 of the new Wild Birds Directive (measures to maintain the population of bird species).

Habitats Regulations Licensing

Where works will affect a protected species, then a protected species licence may be required and would need to be obtained prior to undertaking the works. The licence can only be issued if the "3 tests" are satisfied, these are:

Test 1 – the purposes of "preserving public health or safety, or for reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment".

Test 2 – there must be "no satisfactory alternative"; and

Test 3 – the derogation is "not detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range".

Licences are issued by Natural Resources Wales (NRW), with NRW assessing Test 3, and the Local Planning Authority assessing tests 1 & 2 (where proposals are not subject to planning, then NRW alone will assess all three tests). Where Planning regulations apply, the NRW will only issue a licence after determination of the planning application. The 3 tests must also be assessed at the planning determination stage.

2.2 NATIONAL (UK)

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (As Amended)
The WCA protects the UK's most vulnerable and rare species as outlined below.

Section 1 – breeding birds.

The basic protection afforded to all birds is:

- *Protection from killing, injury or taking of any wild bird*
- *Protection from taking, damaging or destroying the nest of any wild bird*
- *Protection from taking or destroying the egg of any wild bird*

Birds listed on Schedule 1 of the Act are afforded extra levels of protection:

- *Disturbance whilst nest building,*
- *Whilst at or near a nest with eggs or young,*
- *Disturbing the dependant young of such a bird.*

- There are exemptions from this basic protection for, for example: sale, control of pest species and sporting eg. game birds outside of the close season; development is not considered an exemption.
- **Section 9 (Schedule 5) - protected animals (other than birds)**
- All animals listed on Schedule 5 are protected against killing, injury or taking. Any structure/place used for shelter or protection is protected against damage, destruction or obstructing access to. It is also an offence to disturb an animal whilst using such a structure / place. Some species such as the more widespread species of reptiles (slow worm, common lizard, adder and grass snake) are afforded "Part Protection" meaning that only some of the protection outlined above applies – eg the animals may be protected from killing/injury, but not their structure used for shelter/protection.
- **Section 13 (Schedule 8) – protected plants.**
- Protected plants are protected from: being picked, uprooted or destroyed, sale and advertising for sale.

THE PROTECTION OF BADGERS ACT 1992

Badgers are protected from killing, injury and taking; or attempting to kill, injure or take. Badger setts are also afforded protection and it is an offence to:

- *Damage a badger sett or any part of it*
- *Destroy a badger sett*
- *Obstruct access to any entrance of a badger sett*
- *Disturb a badger when it is occupying a badger sett*

Development which will destroy or disturb a badger sett (within 30m) is subject to licensing; by NRW.

2.3 NATIONAL (WALES)

PLANNING POLICY WALES (EDITION 12, FEBRUARY 2024)

6.2.8 The role of development as part of a spatial approach will be two fold. Planning authorities firstly must ensure that development avoids and then minimises impact on biodiversity and ecosystems and secondly that it provides opportunities for enhancement within areas identified as important for the ability of species to adapt and/or to move to more suitable habitats.

6.2.9 Planning authorities must encourage the appropriate management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna ….. and other statutory and non-statutory designated sites. The features concerned are those which, because of their linear and continuous structure or their function as 'stepping stones' or 'wildlife corridors', are essential for migration,

dispersal or genetic exchange. The protection and creation of networks of statutory and non-statutory sites and of the landscape features which provide links from one habitat to another can make an important contribution to developing resilient ecological networks and securing a net benefit for biodiversity and in doing so improve the quality of the local place and its ability to adapt to climate change.

6.2.12 A green infrastructure statement should be submitted with all planning applications. This will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and will describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal.

6.4.3 ….. Recognising that development needs to take place and some biodiversity may be impacted, the planning system should ensure that overall there is a net benefit for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, resulting in enhanced well-being. Addressing the consequences of climate change should be a central part of any measures to protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems. secure the maintenance and enhancement of ecosystem resilience and resilient ecological networks by improving diversity, extent, condition, and connectivity.

6.4.4 It is important that biodiversity and ecosystem resilience considerations are taken into account at an early stage in both development plan preparation and when proposing or considering development proposals Where adverse effects on biodiversity and ecosystem resilience cannot be avoided,
minimised or mitigated/restored, and as a last resort compensated for, it will be necessary to refuse planning permission.

6.4.5 Planning authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. This means development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species (not including non native invasive species), locally or nationally and must work alongside nature and it must provide a net benefit for biodiversity and improve, or enable the improvement, of the resilience of ecosystems…….

6.4.11 Planning authorities must follow a step- wise approach to maintain and enhance biodiversity, build resilient ecological networks and deliver net benefits for biodiversity by ensuring that any adverse environmental effects are firstly avoided, then minimized, mitigated, and as a last resort compensated for…….

6.4.12 Having worked iteratively, in line with Figure 12, through the stages of the step-wise approach below, and providing evidence in the Green Infrastructure Statement that the step-wise approach has been followed, a scheme of enhancements must be provided to ensure a net benefit for biodiversity. Where biodiversity enhancement proportionate to the scale and nature of the development is not proposed as part of an application, significant weight will be given to its absence, and unless other significant material considerations indicate otherwise, it will be necessary to refuse permission…….

6.4.15 (2). When all locational, siting and design options for avoiding damage to biodiversity have been exhausted, applicants, in discussion with planning authorities, must seek to minimise the initial impact on biodiversity and ecosystems……

6.4.15 (5). Each stage of the step-wise approach must be accompanied by a long term management plan of agreed and appropriate avoidance, minimisation, mitigation/restoration and compensation measures alongside the agreed enhancement measures. The management plan should set out the immediate and on-going management of the site, future monitoring arrangements for all secured measures and it should clearly identify the funding mechanisms in place to meet the management plan objectives. The management plan must set out how a net benefit for biodiversity will be achieved within as short a time as possible and be locally responsive and relevant to local circumstances.

6.4.15 (6) Finally, where the adverse effect on biodiversity and ecosystem resilience clearly outweighs other material considerations, the development should be refused.

6.4.16 Potential applicants should not conduct any pre-emptive site clearance works before submitting a planning application as this can make it more difficult for a development proposal to secure a net

benefit for biodiversity. Where a site has been cleared prior to development its biodiversity value should be deemed to have been as it was before any site investigations or clearance took place. A net benefit for biodiversity must be achieved from that point.

6.4.31 Although non-statutory designations do not have a statutory process for their protection, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, and Regionally Importance Geodiversity Sites make a vital contribution to delivering an ecological network for biodiversity and resilient ecosystems, and they should be given protection in development plans and the development management process. Non-statutory sites can form the core of a vital network of threatened habitats, play an essential role in protecting, maintaining, connecting and restoring biodiversity and contribute to nature recovery and a net benefit for biodiversity. Before authorising development likely to damage a local wildlife designation, planning authorities should give notice of the proposed operation to the local authority Ecologist and third sector environmental organisations. In all cases a written opinion must be secured from the local authority Ecologist……

6.4.35 The presence of a species protected under European or UK legislation, or under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal which, if carried out, would be likely to result in disturbance or harm to the species or its habitat and to ensure that the range and population of the species is sustained.

6.4.42 Permanent removal of trees, woodland and hedgerows will only be permitted where it would achieve significant and clearly defined public benefits. Where individual or groups of trees and hedgerows are removed as part of a proposed scheme, planning authorities must first follow the step-wise approach as set out in paragraph 6.4.15. Where loss is unavoidable developers will be required to provide compensatory planting (which is proportionate to the proposed loss as identified through an assessment of green infrastructure value including biodiversity, landscape value and carbon capture). Replacement planting shall be at a ratio equivalent to the quality, environmental and ecological importance of the tree(s) lost and this must be preferably onsite, or immediately adjacent to the site, and at a minimum ratio of at least 3 trees of a similar type and compensatory size planted for every 1 lost……..

6.4.43 Ancient woodland, semi-natural woodlands, individual ancient, veteran and heritage trees and ancient hedgerows are irreplaceable natural resources, and have significant landscape, biodiversity and cultural value. Such trees, woodlands and hedgerows are to be afforded protection from development which would result in their loss or deterioration unless very exceptionally there are significant and clearly defined public benefits; this protection must prevent potentially damaging operations and their unnecessary loss…..

6.8.1 There is a need to balance the provision of lighting to enhance safety and security to help in the prevention of crime and to allow activities like sport and recreation to take place with the need to:

- protect the natural and historic environment including wildlife and features of the natural environment such as tranquillity;

BUILDING WITH NATURE

Applicants should consider standards for development design “Building with Nature” which can be found at www.Buildingwithnature.org.uk

PLANNING POLICY WALES SEPTEMBER 2009 (TECHNICAL ADVICE NOTE 5: NATURE CONSERVATION AND PLANNING)

Section 6.2.1 – the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a local planning authority is considering a development proposal, that, if carried out, would be likely to result in disturbance or harm to the species or its habitat.

Section 6.2.2 – It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted.

ENVIRONMENT (WALES) ACT 2016 - THE BIODIVERSITY AND RESILIENCE OF ECOSYSTEMS DUTY

The Environment (Wales) Act became law on 21st March 2016 and replaces the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. It puts in place legislation to enable Wales' resources to be managed in a more proactive, sustainable and joined up manner and to form part of the legislative framework necessary to tackle climate change. The Act supports the Welsh Governments wider remit under the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 so that Wales may benefit from a prosperous economy, a healthy and resilient environment and vibrant, cohesive communities. Caerphilly County Borough Council as a public body has obligations under section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 to demonstrate how the Local Authority will "***seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the proper exercise of their functions and in doing so promote the resilience of ecosystems***".

The intention is to ensure that in carrying out their functions, public authorities will:

- *Place biodiversity as a natural and integral part of policy and decision making within public bodies, embedding it in its plans, policies and projects and day-to-day activities*
- *Address biodiversity decline through positive actions that will result in maintenance or enhancement of our biodiversity*
- *Develop ecosystem resilience through maintaining and enhancing biodiversity*

The reporting associated with the Section 6 duty will report against the 6 NRAP objectives (see section on Nature Recovery Plan, below)

A resilient ecosystem is one that is healthy and functions in a way that is able to address the pressures and demands that are placed on it, and is able to meet current social, economic and environmental needs whilst being able to also provide the same benefits for future generation. A resilient ecosystem is the cornerstone of the "Resilient Wales" goal in the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.

STATE OF NATURAL RESOURCES REPORT (SONARR)

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 [EWA] requires Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to publish a State of Natural Resources Report[1] (SoNaRR); to provide information on the current state of our natural resources to enable Welsh Ministers to set priorities for action at the national level. The Authority is required to have regard to the findings of this report in exercising its functions.

The SoNaRR report, finalised in September 2016 recommends a proactive approach to building resilience and for the first time links the resilience of Welsh natural resources to the well-being of the people of Wales. This Report will underpin Natural Resources Policy.
The economic and social benefits that a fully functioning environment can provide to human society include agricultural production, forestry, building materials, tourism and leisure, energy generation, flood prevention, pollination services for crops, clean water, clean air and healthy soils. The SoNaRR report spells out the major threats to the proper functioning of ecosystems in Wales, which include:

- *Climate change*
- *Land use change*
- *Over exploitation of natural resources; and*

[1] https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/the-state-of-natural-resources-report-assessment-of-the-sustainable-management-of-natural-resources/?lang=en

- *Nutrient enrichment and pollution*

NATURE RECOVERY PLAN

The Welsh Government launched the Nature Recovery Plan[2] (NRP) which sets out its commitment to biodiversity in Wales and how Wales will address the Convention on Biological Diversity's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the associated Aichi biodiversity targets in Wales. The Nature Recovery Action Plan links to and complements The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment Act (Wales) 2016.
The NRP highlights the issues that we need to address and the objectives for action to show how, in Wales we can address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss. Specifically through:

- *Putting nature at the heart of decision making*
- *Increasing the resilience of our natural environment*
- *Taking specific action for habitats and species*

The Nature Recovery Plan consists of three parts:
Part 1: Sets out the position with regard to biodiversity in Wales
Part 2: actions identified to support biodiversity, **(The Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP)**
Part 3: Under development: The Nature Recovery Framework

2.4 PREVIOUS SURVEYS

There are no known previous surveys of this site.

2.5 CONSTRAINTS

N/A

[2] https://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/Nature-Recovery-Action-Plan

3 DESK STUDY

3.1 SUMMARY

There are no SACs or SSSIs within 1km of the development site.

12 non statutorily designated sites, e.g. Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation were identified within the data search.

3.2 BACKGROUND

A desk study provides background information on historical and current biological data which can identify ecological constraints, mitigation, and biodiversity enhancement opportunities.

3.3 METHODOLOGY

The South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) was consulted in order to provide biological information on the presence of species and sites on or adjacent to the site.

A 2000m search buffer was applied to priority and protected species, species of local conservation concern and other species of conservation concern, statutorily designated sites (for nature conservation purposes) and 2000m locally designated sites.

The Multi-Agency Geographical Information System (MAGIC) website (www.magic.gov.uk) and the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) for MTCBC were also consulted.

3.4 CONSTRAINTS

There were no constraints to the data search

3.5 RESULTS

3.5.1 Statutorily protected sites

3.5.1.1 European designated sites

There are no European Designated Sites within 1000m of the development site.

3.5.1.2 United Kingdom designated sites

There is one SSSI within 2km of the site

3.5.2 Non-statutory designations

The following SINCs are found within 1000m of the site:

Mynydd y Capel Common (687m)

Afon Taf (224m)

Tarran y Gigfran (139m)

West of Aberfan (176m)

Merthyr Vale (493m)

St Tydfil Forest (West) (317m)

Cefn Forest (399m)

St Tydfil Forest (East) (620m)

It is extremely unlikely that any SINC will be affected by any development on the site.

3.5.3 Species: SEWBReC data search

The closest record is of a pipistrelle roost 121m away from the site. The

next closest record is a soprano pipistrelle record from the Taff Trail

3.6 PREVIOUS SURVEYS

None known.

4 PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY

4.1 SUMMARY

A number of habitats were recorded across and adjacent to the survey area. These included:

- cleared site with early successional vegetation

The potential for a number of protected species was recorded, including habitats suitable for:

- Bats;
- Great crested newt;
- Badgers;
- Otter;
- Breeding birds;
- Reptiles;
- Invertebrates;

The habitats are shown on **the phase 1 map below**

4.2 BACKGROUND

The Phase 1 habitat survey was carried out to assess the existing habitats, identify any protected habitats or species that may be present, determine the impact of the proposed works on them, and identify any mitigation measures that may be necessary. This was done by undertaking both a desk study and field survey.

The survey was undertaken on 1st July 2025.

Phase 1 habitat survey is a way of recording the basic habitat data to form a baseline level of knowledge of the ecology of a site and provide recommendations for future surveys if considered necessary.

4.3 METHODOLOGY

4.3.1 Desk study:

A biological data search was undertaken. Refer to section 3 above.

4.3.2 Field survey:

Experienced surveyors from BE Ecological Ltd carried out a habitat assessment and mapping exercise in January 2025 using the Phase 1 habitat survey technique. Nomenclature follows Stace (1997)[3]. The survey was carried out by Beth Evans.

[3] Stace, C (1997). *New Flora of the British Isles* (2nd Ed.). Cambridge University Press

Features of note are assigned Target Notes (TN) and referenced accordingly and described at the **Appendix**

4.4 CONSTRAINTS

N/A

4.5 RESULTS

4.5.1 Habitats

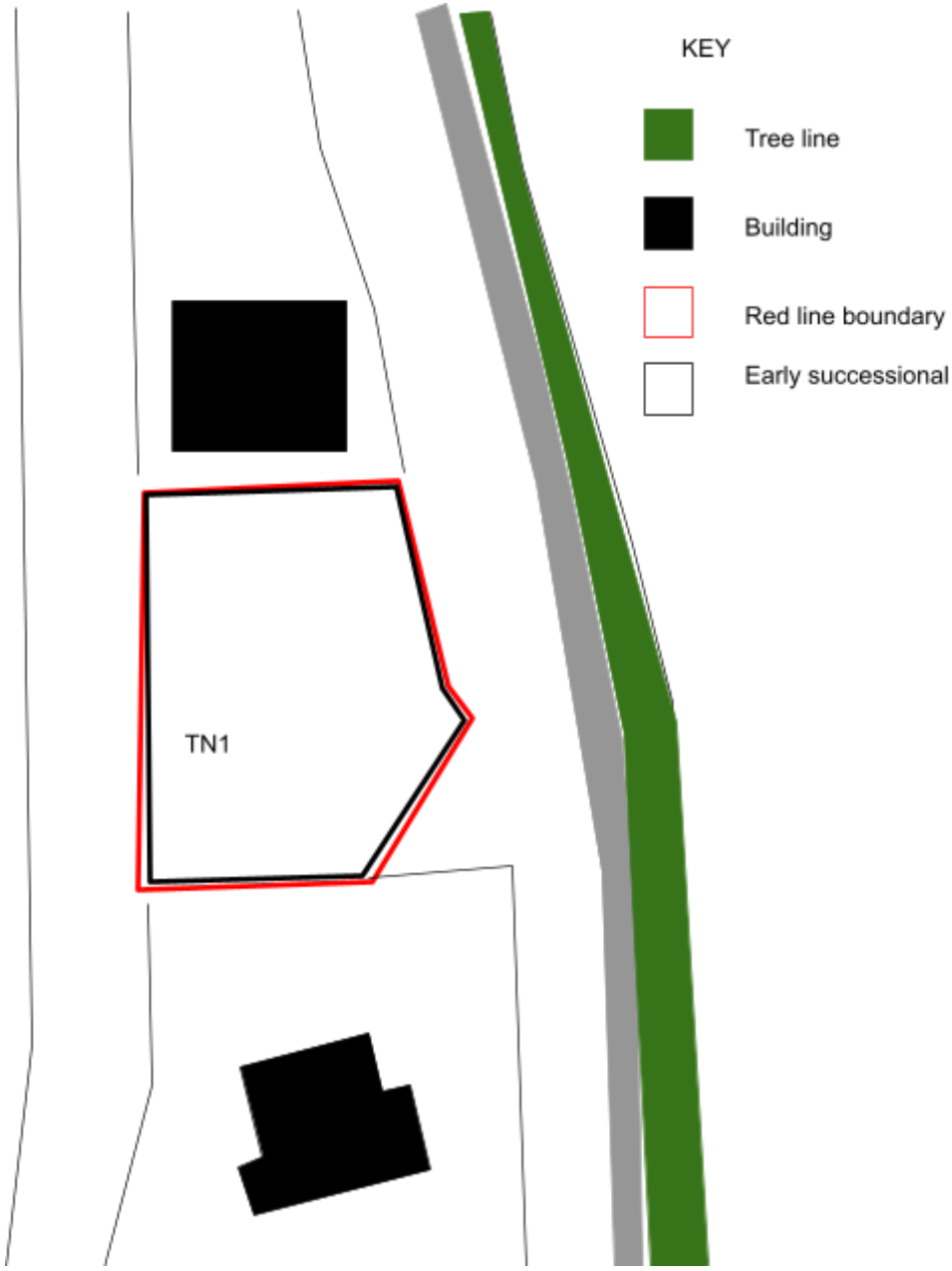
The following habitats were found on and adjacent to the site and are mapped below

- Cleared land with early successional vegetation

Photos are located at **Appendix A**

4.5.1.1 Early successional vegetation/bare ground

This habitat is found across the main body of the site. Species here include, rosebay willowherb, bracken, bramble, perennial ryegrass, hedge bindweed, creeping thistle, broad-leaved dock, curled dock, dandelion, pineapple weed, foxes and cubs, creeping thistle, hoary mustard and white clover.



Phase 1 habitat survey map

4.5.2 Protected species assessment

4.5.2.1 Bats

Records
The closest record for members for this group is 121m from the site and refers to a common pipistrelle bat roost.

Habitat suitability

It is possible that bats will use the site for foraging and commuting. There are no structures or trees on the site suitable for roosting bats.

Impacts without mitigation
Negative impacts may include disturbance from construction works, loss of foraging habitat and light spill onto commuting corridors (Taff Trail).

4.5.2.2 Amphibians & great crested newt

Records
The are no records of great crested newt within 1km of the site.

Habitat Assessment
There are no ponds present on the development site which could be used by this group for breeding purposes. It is unlikely that newts will use the site terrestrially.

Impacts without mitigation
There is unlikely to be an impact on great crested newt.

4.5.2.3 Dormouse

Records
There is a record of dormice approximately 1624m away.

Habitat suitability
There is no suitable habitat for dormice on site.

Impacts without mitigation
There is unlikely to be any impacts on dormice as a result of the proposed development.

4.5.2.4 Badgers

Records
There are no records of badger within 1km of the site.

Habitat suitability
There is suitable habitat for foraging but due to the location, openness and nature of the site, the land is unlikely to be suitable for sett excavation. It is possible that badger will use habitat further afield. There was no sign of badger throughout the survey.

Impacts without mitigation
There is unlikely to be any impacts on badger as a result of the proposed development.

4.5.2.5 Breeding birds

Records
There are multiple records for members of this group within the data search but none from the site. Birds heard and seen on and adjacent to the site include sparrow, dunnock and jackdaw.

Habitat suitability

There is suitable habitat for nesting birds.

The habitats on the site are not considered to be suitable for ground nesting birds given the small overlooked nature of the site, the high levels of disturbance on the site,), the availability of avian predator perches and the presence of predators (cats from neighbouring houses).

Impacts without mitigation
There is no suitable nesting bird habitat on site therefore impacts are unlikely.

4.5.2.6 Reptiles

Records
There are records of slow worm within 1000m of the site.
Habitat assessment
The site offers some habitat for this species for foraging, basking, sheltering and hibernation purposes and it is likely that slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*), common lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*) and grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) use the site. It is likely that small numbers of reptiles may be present on the interfaces between bare habitat and longer vegetation.

The habitat assessment looked for features that would be attractive to reptiles such as:

South facing banks;
Varied profile ground form;
Basking areas;
Vegetation cover;
Structurally diverse vegetation;
Potential brumation (hibernation) sites;
Evidence of suitable prey sources;
Connectivity to other potentially suitable reptile habitat; and
Levels of disturbance/land management.

FIELD SURVEY

Target areas of potential reptile habitat were identified, and squares of approximately 0.5m² roofing felt were laid. This was carried out when the ground vegetation was dry, in order to prevent plant matter under the tins from rotting due to wet conditions, as this would deter reptiles from seeking refuge under them.

30 mats were put out in August 2025 in suitable target areas of habitat across the site and allowed to 'bed in' for at least one week. This time period generally will allow any reptiles in the area to discover and begin to use them as a regular basking site.

Experienced ecologists from BE Ecological Ltd undertook checks. All tins were checked seven times under suitable weather conditions and temperatures in order to determine the presence, or otherwise, of reptiles in the area.

Mats were checked during appropriate weather windows.

The mats were checked on the following dates:

21/08/25- mats down;
01/09/25;
08/09/25;
11/09/25;
18/09/25;
22/09/25;
30/09/25; and
03/10/25 - end of survey.

Where reptiles were found,species, number of animals and sex were noted

Visit number	Date	Temp	Weather	Species and no	Life stage
1	01/09/25	17	Sunny,cloudy spells, light wind	N/A	N/A
2	08/09/25	15	Some cloud, sunny spell	N/A	N/A
3	11/09/25	15	Sunny,cloudy spells, light wind	N/A	N/A
4	18/09/25	17	Overcast, sunny spells	N/A	N/A
5	22/09/25	16	Some cloud, sunny spell	N/A	N/A
6	30/09/25	18	Sunny,cloudy spells, light wind	N/A	N/A
7	03/10/25	15	Some cloud, sunny spell	N/A	N/A

Impacts without mitigation

No reptiles were identified throughout the survey. Without mitigation the proposals are unlikely to have an impact on reptiles. However, as reptiles can colonise an area quickly, all work will be undertaken in line with a method statement (appended to this report).

4.5.2.7 Invertebrates

Records
There are records of section 7 species within the data search.

Habitat assessment
It is likely that common and widespread invertebrates will utilise the site.. It is possible that some Section 7 species will use the site. There is a varied mosaic of habitats on the site. There is abundant invertebrate habitat within the surrounding areas.

There are some food plants present on site for numerous invertebrates including section 7 species

Impacts without mitigation
It is considered that there will be a loss of breeding and foraging habitat for this group.

4.5.3 Other features

None.

5 CONCLUSION

The site has been put forth for development.. BE Ecological Ltd was commissioned to undertake a preliminary ecological appraisal of the site.

On the 11th October 2023, ahead of PPW12 being published, the new Chapter 6 came into force with immediate effect. Net benefit must be secured via planning applications using the step-wise approach, including the acknowledgement of off-site compensation measures and the need to consider enhancement and long- term management.

A Green Infrastructure Statement will be required to demonstrate the step wise approach. The site has been cleared and measures may be required in order to compensate for vegetation loss.

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.

Any new planting should be native and of local a provenance of possible. Detailed enhancements will be required with any application should development be permitted at the site.

This report will be valid for 18 months from the date of survey.

PPW12 states the following " "Potential applicants should not conduct any pre-emptive site clearance works before submitting a planning application as this can make it more difficult for a development proposal to secure a net benefit for biodiversity. Where a site has been cleared prior to development its biodiversity value should bedeemed to have been as it was before any site investigations or clearance took place. A net benefit for biodiversity must be achieved from that point. Habitat status can be established through evidence remaining on site and local desk-based assessments (planning authorities must ensure that they have access to these data sources). In such cases, habitat status will be presumed to be good in the absence of any evidence to the contrary."

"Permanent removal of trees, woodland and hedgerows will only be permitted where it would achieve significant and clearly defined public benefits. Where individual or groups of trees and hedgerows are removed as part of a proposed scheme, planning authorities must first follow the step-wise approach as set out in paragraph 6.4.15. Where loss is unavoidable developers will be required to provide compensatory planting (which is proportionate to the proposed loss as identified through an assessment of green infrastructure 139 Further advice in relation to ancient woodland is available on NRW's website. value including biodiversity, landscape value and carbon capture). Replacement planting shall be at a ratioequivalent to the quality, environmental and ecological importance of the tree(s) lost and this must be preferably onsite, or immediately adjacent to the site, and at a minimum ratio of at least 3 trees of a similar type and compensatory size planted for every 1 lost. Where a woodland or a shelterbelt area is lost as part of a proposed scheme, the compensation planting must be at a scale, design and species mix reflective of that area lost. In such circumstances, the planting rate must be at a minimum of 1600 trees per hectare for broadleaves, and 2500 trees per hectare for conifers. The planting position for each replacement tree shall be fit to support its establishment and health and ensure its unconstrained long-term growth to optimise the environmental and ecological benefits it affords."

Whilst the site clearance was not pre-emptive of planning, the site was bought by the land owner in its current state, measures will be implemented in order to compensate for losses.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

New planting trees, shrub and wildflower will be required.

In order to satisfy PPW12, three trees will be planted for every tree that is lost. From aerial photography there appears to have been three trees removed from the site (likely willow). Nine native trees will be planted within the development to compensate for this loss.

The removal of vegetation has resulted in a break in the north south corridor vegetative strip. In order to compensate for the break in connectivity along the north west corridor, a native species hedgerow will be planted along the full length of the eastern boundary of the site. The plants will be of as local a provenance as possible. Bramble and other species will be allowed to grow through the hedge providing a dense barrier. The hedgerow will be managed appropriately.

Bats

Due to the presence of foraging and commuting habitat mitigation will need to include minimising light spill onto the boundaries during and after the construction phase.

A sensitive lighting plan will need to be produced to ensure a dark buffer zone along all boundaries of the site. All lighting will be in line with the following guidance: https://www.bats.org.uk/news/2023/08/bats-and-artificial-lighting-at-night-ilp-guidance-note-update-released

Measures to benefit bats will be included within the housing development
e.g. installation of bat boxes on new buildings

Breeding birds

All vegetation and brash removal should be undertaken outwith the breeding season i.e. between mid-August / September and April inclusive

Any clearance close to the start and end of this period should only be undertaken following an assessment by a suitably experienced ecologist as the breeding season is not fixed and is subject to annual variation

Where clearance is required during the breeding season, all areas should be subject to an assessment no more than 48 hours in advance to check for the presence of breeding birds

Should evidence of breeding birds, in particularly nests, be recorded, no clearance may be undertaken within 15m of any nest site until such time as the nest is vacated naturally

Any post-development landscaping plan should include the provision of scrub &/or shrub habitats that can be utilised by breeding birds.

Measures to benefit birds within the housing development will be required e.g. installation of bird boxes on new buildings

Reptile

A reptile presence or likely absence survey has been undertaken. No reptiles were found throughout the course of the survey. All clearance will be undertaken in accordance with the method statement in the appendix.

Invertebrates

Enhancement measures should include native species planting to support a wide range of pollinators and other invertebrates

7 REFERENCES

Bat Conservation Trust and the Institution of Lighting Professionals (2023) Bats and artificial lighting in the UK; Bats and the Built Environment series (Guidance Note GN08/23), The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (April, 2013) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. CIEEM, Winchester.

Institute for Environmental Assessment (1995). Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment. E & FN Spon, Hong Kong.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey; A technique for environmental audit. Reprinted by JNCC, Peterborough.

APPENDIX A - PHOTOS

PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY PHOTOS

Plate 1- View facing north

Plate 2- south western corner

Plate 3- western boundary

Plate 4- north western corner

APPENDIX B– SPECIES LIST

Rosebay willowherb, bracken, bramble, perennial ryegrass, hedge bindweed, creeping thistle, broad-leaved dock, curled dock, dandelion, pineapple weed, foxes and cubs, creeping thistle, hoary mustard and white clover.

APPENDIX C– Target Notes

1- Rubble pile

APPENDIX B – METHOD STATEMENT- REPTILES

1. All clearance will be supervised by a suitably experienced ecologist until such time as the ecologist states that direct supervision is not necessary.

2. The ecologist will be on call for the duration of clearance works.

3. Vegetation will be cleared from directly affected areas only and the area minimised wherever possible.

4. All vegetation and brash removal will preferentially be undertaken during the winter months i.e. between November and February inclusive.

5. If this is not possible, all areas to be cleared must be subject of a finger-tip search by an ecologist immediately prior to and during any clearance work; the ecologist should also be present while all post hole excavation (or other ground breaking should it be required) is being undertaken.

6. Should evidence of breeding birds, in particularly nests, be recorded, no clearance may be undertaken within 5m of any nest site until such time as the nest is vacated naturally.

7. No spraying of vegetation to be carried out. Vegetation will be maintained close to ground using repeated cutting only. 1x Hibernaculum will be added to an area of the garden remaining unaffected by the development. Materials already onsite (e.g., brash, logs) will be used.

8. Woody vegetation will be cleared (ONLY IF NECESSARY) to ground level using a chainsaw with all arisings stacked in unaffected areas NOT on areas of tall vegetation (over 300mm). Where necessary, stumps and roots will only be removed by machine (under ecological supervision) once the clearance is complete.

9. All woody vegetation will be checked by the ecologist prior to cutting for the presence of bird nests.

10. Vegetation will be cut in three phases. The first phase will reduce the vegetation height to 150mm; the second will reduce it to ≈50mm; the third phase will reduce the height to as close to ground level as possible.

11. All vegetation cutting will be directional. This ensures that any animals present will be pushed from the site into adjacent retained habitats.

12. After clearance, if the vegetation is allowed to regrow above 150mm high, it will be cut and raked as described above.

13. Where necessary, potential hibernacula (brash, log piles, stumps, roots etc) will only be cleared during the active season (March-October) while day time temperatures are consistently over 12°C for a period of at least seven days prior as otherwise reptiles may be killed or injured as a result of inconsistent (low) temperatures (during the day and night) and/or low prey availability. Potential hibernacula will only be dismantled by hand unless the supervising ecologist gives the approval for machine dismantling.

14. If a bird's nest is observed on the site, the ecologist will assess it to determine whether or not it is active, the species concerned, the lifecycle state of any occupants and provide advice on next steps.

15. If reptiles are observed within the clearance area during the works, a decision on how to deal with them will be made on site in light of the conditions on site at the time and the state of the animals themselves. There are three options for dealing with them:

• It may be possible to leave the animals alone to find their own way into cover, depending on where they are seen, what they are doing and their apparent activity levels; or
• Capture, remove from site and take into temporary captivity until such time as they can be released adjacent to the cleared area (a vivarium has been prepared in case it is required); or

• Should conditions allow, capture and translocate the animals to a safe area immediately adjacent to the site.

16. Habitat and the unlikely presence for other species (e.g. dormice, otter, great crested newts & other amphibians etc.) can be identified and avoided by following this method statement.

17. In the event that a European Protected Species is observed during the clearance,, all work will stop, and the ecologist consulted. It will be necessary to consult with Natural Resources Wales; further surveys and a development licence may be required before work can recommence.

If large numbers of reptiles are discovered, an offsite receptor area should be suggested to be agreed by the County Ecologist.

NOTE: should it be required, a Natural Resources Wales development licence for European Protected Species is likely to take up to 30 working days to be issued following submission