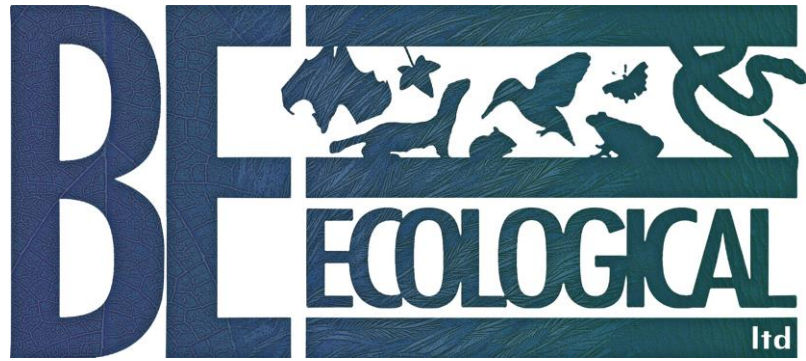




**2, SOMERSET LANE, CEFN-COED-Y-CYMMER, MERTHYR
TYDFIL**

ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

DECEMBER 2020

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2 SOMERSET LANE, MERTHYR TYDFIL

Proposed Development: Demolition of 2 Somerset Lane

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

BE Ecological Ltd. was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) to identify ecological constraints and potential solutions and to inform the design of a proposed development and planning application for a replacement dwelling at 2 Somerset Lane, Cefn-Coed-Y-Cymmer, Merthyr Tydfil.

Therefore, a Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken, extended by the inclusion of a biological records data search and an assessment of the potential for protected species to be present on and adjacent to the site. Please note, a BARB data search was only undertaken. It was considered unnecessary to undertake a full data search due to the fact that the site comprises of a building, hard standing, fences and walls, a small area of amenity grassland and a patch of isolated bramble.

A number of habitats were recorded across the application boundary, including:

- Amenity grassland;
- Hard standing;
- Fence;
- Building;
- scrub;

No evidence of botanical species of conservation concern was recorded during the survey.

No evidence of non-native invasive botanical species was observed on the application site.

There is a potential for the following protected species to be present on or adjacent to the site:

- Reptiles;
- Bats
- Amphibians; and
- Breeding birds

It is considered that the site has a generally low ecological value at a local level

It is recommended that:

- The site / development areas within the application boundary be cleared in accordance with a method statement to prevent causing harm to reptiles and amphibians;
- Mitigation outlined within the various sections of this report is implemented

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The applicant is submitting a planning application for the demolition and replacement of 2 Somerset Lane, Cefn-Coed-Y-Cymmer, Merthyr Tydfil.

1.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is located on the western edge of 2 Somerset Lane, Cefn-Coed-Y-Cymmer, Merthyr Tydfil. The site comprises of a bungalow, a single storey garage, a drive, hard standing and a small patch of bramble scrub.

The bungalow is a single-storey structure that is rectangular in shape and has a ridge that generally runs from west to east. There is a single-storey garage to the east that fronts Somerset Lane.

The bungalow is rendered and dashed with stone cladding in some areas. The roof is of concrete tile. Barge boards and fascias where present are of timber and uPVC.

The garage is a single storey block and brick built structure with a felt roof.

The property is situated on the western edge of Somerset Lane. The property is surrounded by houses and associated infrastructure and there are no real connections to the wider landscape other than domestic gardens.

Photos are at Appendix A.

Figure 1 – Detailed view of the site (approximate boundary boxed red)



Figure 2 - aerial overview of the area subject of this application



2 HABITATS SURVEY

2.1 BACKGROUND

A Phase 1 habitat survey was carried out to assess the existing habitats, identify any protected habitats 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 biological records data search and a field survey.

The survey was undertaken on 17th November 2020.

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.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

2.2.1 Desk study:

The South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) were formerly requested to supply a Bat and Roof-nesting Birds (BARB) survey for the site. The survey to provide; bat records within a 2km buffer, roof nesting birds within 150m buffer plus a list of all Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and sites of Special of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designated for bat species within a 10km site buffer in November 2020. The data search reference number is 0201-555.

Please note, a BARB data search was only undertaken. It was considered unnecessary to undertake a full data search due to the fact that the site comprises of a building, hard standing, fences and walls, a small area of amenity grassland and a patch of isolated bramble.

Refer to **section 4** for results.

2.2.2 Field survey:

Experienced surveyors from BE Ecological Ltd carried out a habitat assessment and mapping exercise in November 2020 using the Phase 1 habitat survey technique. Nomenclature follows Stace (1997)¹.

Features of note are assigned Target Notes (TN) and referenced accordingly and described at **Table 7** in section 3.1.2 below and shown at **Figure 3**.

2.3 CONSTRAINTS

There were no other constraints to the surveys and assessments undertaken.

¹ Stace, C (1997). *New Flora of the British Isles* (2nd Ed.). Cambridge University Press

3 RESULTS

3.1 BIOLOGICAL DATA SEARCH

3.1.1 Species

There were no biological records identified by the data provider for the application site.

The closest records to the development site for roosting bats are 101 and 155m from the application site. Both of these roosts are identified as common pipistrelles.

The closest bird record to the site refer to swift, house sparrow, blue tit and great tit. All of which were 150m from the site.

3.1.2 Sites

No Nationally or Internationally important sites (e.g. SSSIs, SACs or SPAs) designated for bats lie within the search buffer.

Other than habitat for bats, there are a limited number of habitats on the site and the site is completely isolated from any other protected sites. As such, protected sites will not be mentioned further in this report.

3.1 FIELD SURVEY

3.1.1 Habitat description

Please refer to **section 1.2** above.

3.1.2 Target notes

Table 7 - target notes:

Target note (TN#)	Description
TN1	Stone wall with small number of ruderal species

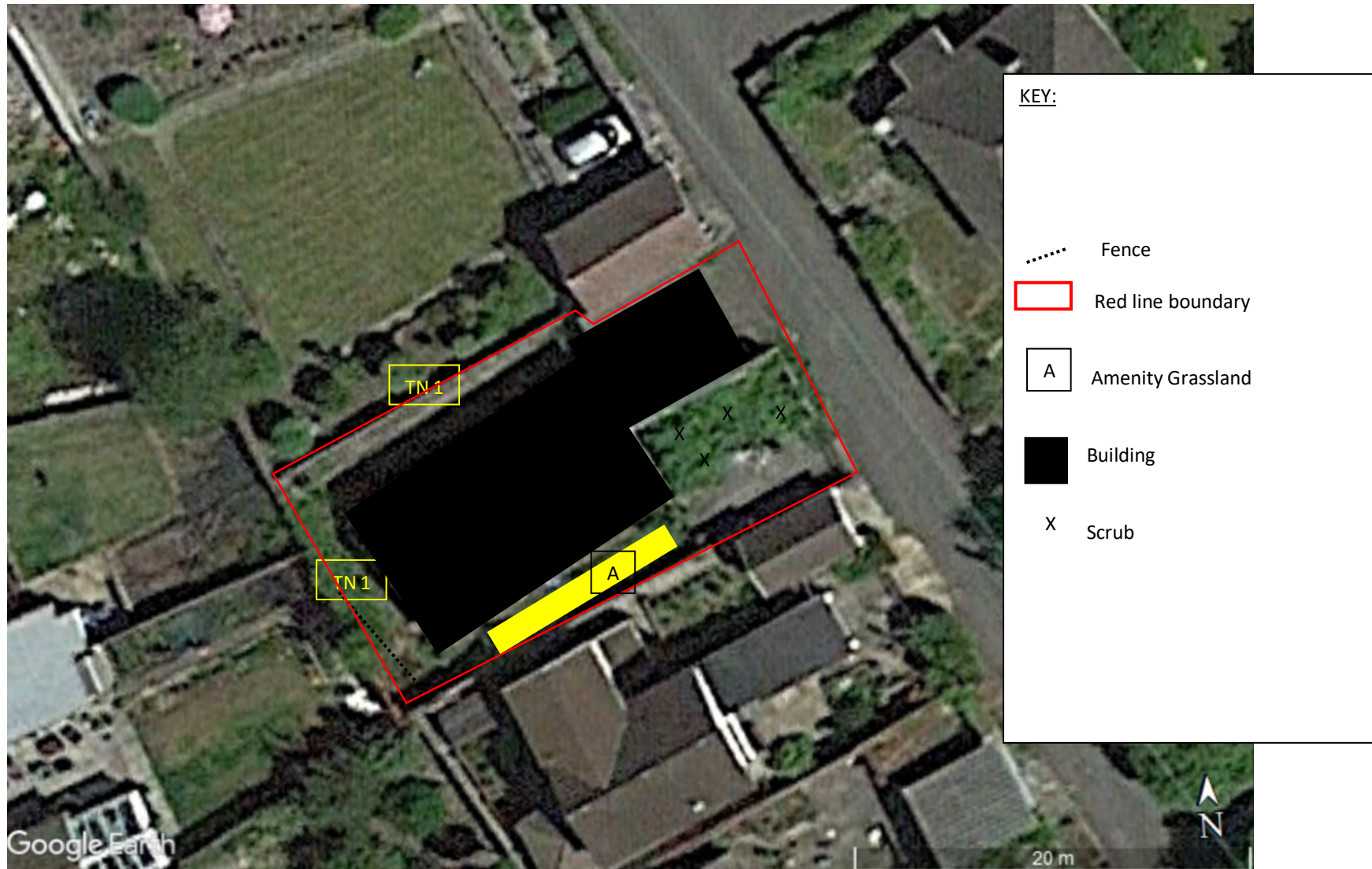
3.1.3 Habitats

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

- Amenity grassland;
- Bramble scrub;
- Building;
- Fences and
- Walls

Please refer to **Figure 3**.

Figure 3 – Habitat survey results



4 HABITATS - EVALUATION, IMPACT CHARACTERISATION & ASSESSMENT

4.1 AMENITY GRASSLAND

4.1.1 Amenity grassland - evaluation

There is only a small area of this habitat to the south. The area is overgrown and dying. Species include red fescue, common bent and rye grass. This habitat is limited in species diversity and as a result of its condition has no real ecological value.

4.1.2

Amenity grassland- impact characterisation

It is considered that without mitigation the entire area of this habitat would be lost to the development.

4.1.3 Amenity grassland - impact assessment without mitigation

It is considered that without mitigation there would be a **certain significant permanent adverse impact** on this habitat as all of it will be removed. However, this area of habitat is of no great ecological value.

4.1.4 Amenity grassland – potential mitigation measures

Specific mitigation will not be required due to the low ecological value of this habitat type. The habitat is common and fast growing.

4.1.5 Amenity grassland - impact assessment with mitigation

It is considered that with mitigation there will be a **certain minor short term adverse impact** on this habitat as a result of the development.

4.1.6 Amenity grassland - significance of the impact

Without mitigation:

It is considered that the impacts of the development would be of a **neutral** significance.

With mitigation:

N/A

4.2 SCRUB

4.2.1 Scrub - evaluation

There is a small patch of scrub to the east of the site. The habitat comprises of bramble. This habitat is species poor and its only real ecological lies within the cover it may provide to protected species,

4.2.2 Scrub - impact characterisation

The entire area of scrub will be lost.

4.2.3 Scrub - impact without mitigation

It is considered that without mitigation there would be a **certain minor permanent adverse** impact at a **local (site)** level.

4.2.4 Scrub - potential mitigation measures

Specific mitigation will not be required due to the low ecological value of this habitat type and the small area present on the development site. The habitat is common and fast growing.

4.2.5 Hedges - impact with mitigation

It is considered that with mitigation there would be an **certain minor short term adverse** impact at a **local (site)** level.

4.2.6 Hedges - significance of the impact

Without mitigation

It is considered that the significance of the impact is **neutral**.

With mitigation

N/A.

5 SPECIES - EVALUATION, IMPACT CHARACTERISATION & ASSESSMENT

5.1 BATS

A preliminary roost assessment was undertaken of the property.

6 METHODOLOGY

6.1 SURVEY OBJECTIVES

- To carry out an initial bat inspection survey the building
- To present the above details and if necessary further surveys, recommendations for mitigation, future research and compensation within this report.
- To carry out a scoping survey for breeding birds

6.2 SURVEY SUMMARY

The bat survey comprised of three parts:

- Initial bat inspection survey of building (including birds)
- Data Search (SEWBRc)
- Single activity survey

6.3 DATA SEARCH

The South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) were formerly requested to supply a Bat and Roof-nesting Birds (BARB) survey for the site. The survey to provide; bat records within a 2km buffer, roof nesting birds within 150m buffer plus a list of all Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designated for bat species within a 10km site buffer in November 2020.

6.4 SURVEYOR INFORMATION

The inspection survey was undertaken by Beth Evans. Beth is the owner of BE ECOLOGICAL LTD and has a postgraduate degree in Environmental Biology: Conservation & Resource Management, specialising in British bats. Beth has 11 years' experience of ecological surveys, both in a small scale and large multi-disciplinary context. Beth also holds Natural Resources Wales and Natural England bat licences to disturb and handle bats. Beth was accompanied on the survey by Hugh Dixon. Hugh has multiple years' experience of bat surveys and also holds Natural Resources Wales and Natural England bat licences to disturb and handle bats.

6.5 INTERNAL & EXTERNAL INSPECTION

An initial inspection survey was carried out on 17th November 2020 by Beth Evans and Hugh Dixon to search the building, both internally and externally to identify potential bat roosting areas and signs of bat use including; live bats, dead bats, droppings, urine staining, grease marks and discarded prey items. The buildings and all areas/items of interest were recorded and photographed. Extension ladders/steps were used to safely access areas where no safe access was available the survey was conducted using, close focus binoculars and/or a high powered lamp.

6.6 SURVEY LIMITATIONS

Any survey for bat species can only be a series of snapshots in time. Bats are highly mobile, long lived creatures (capable of living up to 30 years, sometimes longer) with complex social structures and utilising multiple roost sites within a year. The implications of this are that surveys and surveyors have to make informed assumptions based on observations, recorded data, local information and a detailed knowledge of the species.

7 RESULTS

7.1 INSPECTION SURVEY

7.1.1 External survey results

The survey carried out by BE Ecological Ltd revealed no droppings or evidence of bats on the exterior of the buildings however, there were a number of potential access points into the bungalow and the garage:

Bungalow:

- Gaps beneath soffits
- Gaps beneath barge boards
- Gaps beneath lifted concrete tiles

Garage:

- Gaps beneath fascias
- Possibly gaps in blockwork although they do not appear to lead to a cavity

Please see appended plates for photographs of the building exterior.

7.1.2 Internal survey results

Bungalow:

Internally the attic space is a trussed roof with a joist to ridge height of approximately 2m; it is insulated at joist level with the insulation covering the joists. It is lined with bitumen felt, which has a number of holes in it at numerous points across both pitches. Rat and mouse droppings were observed throughout. Daylight was visible through a number of the gaps in the felt which led to holes and gaps in the tiles, primarily on the northern elevation. There were also gaps visible at the top of the wall plate on the eastern elevation.

There is water pouring through the roof at numerous locations. Rats and water damage are also present in the living space.

Garage:

Internally, the roof appears to be relatively new and is constructed from timber and ply board. The garage is clean and currently used for storage.

There is a gap above the wall plate on the southern elevation, however, this does not appear to go anywhere. The wall plates are sealed on other elevations.

7.2 ACTIVITY SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Building 'emergence' and 're-entry' surveys were carried out on the following dates, times and weather conditions. Climatic conditions including rain, wind, temperature and cloud cover were recorded for each survey using a hand held Kestrel 4500 weather station.

7.2.1 Survey 1- 24th May 2021

A survey was carried out on 10th August using two surveyors ,positioned in such a way that as much of the building was visible to surveyors as possible. Surveyors were equipped with Batlogger M detectors (figure 3).



Figure 3: Approximate surveyor locations

7.3 ACTIVITY SURVEYS

The surveys were undertaken as per the table below:

7.4 SURVEY SCHEDULE AND WEATHER CONDITIONS

Table 1: Schedule and weather conditions

Visit	Date (sunrise) (sunset)	Start End	Time	Temp C	Wind	Cloud Cover	Notes
Survey 1 10 th August 2021	20:50	Start	20:30	17	Low	30%	Dry evening, insects flying
		End	22:50	15	Low	15%	

7.5 ACTIVITY SURVEY RESULTS

7.5.1 Survey 1- 10th August 2021

The first bat heard was a common pipistrelle at 21:16. The bat was heard but not seen. A second common pipistrelle was heard and briefly foraged along the north western boundary of the site. Surveyor 1 briefly heard and seen a number of common pipistrelles commuting back and forth the lane to the east. No other bat species were heard at the site and no bats emerged from the building under survey.

7.6 IDENTIFIED ROOSTS

The building was not identified as a bat roost on this date.

7.7 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

It is considered that the garage is of negligible potential for roosting bats, it was not identified as a roost and that there will be no impact on roosting bats providing it is taken down in line with a method statement and ecological supervision.

The bungalow

Whilst there are numerous points of access into the building for roosting bats. The building is in a state of dilapidation, the property is rat infested and suffering from serious water damage, within both the roof and the ground floor. There are holes between the ground floor and the roof space. There are rats within the living space.

It is considered this significantly reduces the likelihood that the building is capable of supporting roosting bats. As a result of the dilapidation described throughout, it is considered that the building is of low potential only despite the numerous points of ingress.

No bats were identified using the building for roosting purposes during the activity survey.

It is considered that the works may proceed providing that they are undertaken in line with a method statement and ecological supervision.

No evidence of breeding birds was found throughout the buildings at the time of survey.

7.8 ENHANCEMENT BATS AND BIRDS

Two Vivara pro bat tubes https://www.nhbs.com/vivara-pro-build-in-woodstone-bat-box?bkfno=252139&ca_id=1495&gclid=CjwKCAjwybyJBhBwEiwAvz4G7y2zl86npC--0Q1_25TDJ4aMjVOso7raG1aQbtyT-zao5aj92WyFrRoCuRMQAvD_BwE will be installed within the eastern elevation of the new build.

A woodstone sparrow box will be integrated on the western elevation of the new build <https://www.nhbs.com/vivara-pro-woodstone-house-sparrow-nest-box>

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1.1 Timing

It is considered that the property is not a bat roost and as such the works can be undertaken at any time of year.

8.1.2 Timber/roofing materials

It is considered that the building is not a bat roost, as such, restrictions on roofing materials are not required.

8.1.3 Lighting

Bat boxes will not be directly illuminated. All external lighting will face downwards and be set on timers to ensure that bats can use the area should they wish. – In addition to this, any onsite lighting will conform to the following guidelines:

<https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

8.1.4 Bat Licensing

A European Protected Species Licence obtained from Natural Resources Wales will not be required before any works commence. If at any point bats or evidence of bat is found, all works must cease and NRW consulted. Further surveys and/or a licence may be required prior to works recommencing

8.1.5 Supervision

Supervision for the removal of the rooves and demolition of the walls will be required.

8.1.6 Compliance

Following completion of the project, the ecologist will visit the site to verify the correct installation of the enhancement measures (see below). E-mail confirmation will be issued to the LPA.

8.0 BREEDING BIRDS

8.0.1 Summary

Breeding birds are possibly able to use the scrub on the site. The amenity grassland is too disturbed for ground nesting birds to make use of it.

8.0.2 Breeding birds - evaluation

Due to the legislative protection afforded to them, breeding birds are considered to be of **medium – high national** importance.

There is suitable habitat for birds to utilise on the site.

Within the context of the site and the proposed development, it is considered that breeding birds are of **low local** importance.

8.0.3 Birds - impact characterisation

The removal of scrub would reduce the number of opportunities available to breeding birds in terms of nesting area, cover / shelter and foraging.

If vegetation removal was to be undertaken during the breeding season, there is the potential for birds to be disturbed, killed or injured and / or their nests to be disturbed, damaged or destroyed.

8.0.4 Birds - impact without mitigation

It is considered that without mitigation, there would be an **probable minor short term adverse** impact at a **local (site)** level.

8.0.5 Birds - potential mitigation measures

Mitigation will be required and should include (but not be limited to) the following measures:

- 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; and

8.0.6 Birds - impact with mitigation

It is considered that with mitigation, there would be a **very unlikely minor short term adverse** impact at a **local** level.

8.0.7 Birds - significance of the impact

Without mitigation

It is considered that the significance of the impact is **slight**.

With mitigation

It is considered that with appropriate mitigation, the significance of the impact is **neutral**.

8.1 REPTILES

8.1.1 Summary

No reptile survey was undertaken due to the fact it is considered likely that the site could potentially support only a very low number of reptiles if any due to the short sward of the amenity grassland and the lack of species diversity. The area is disturbed frequently.

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

- south facing banks;
- varied profile ground form;
- basking areas;
- vegetation cover;
- structurally diverse vegetation;
- potential hibernation sites; and
- evidence of suitable prey sources.

8.1.2 Reptiles - evaluation

Reptiles are protected by UK legislation and therefore they are of **medium to high national** ecological importance.

Overall the site appears to be of a generally **low** value to reptiles due to only a limited amount of isolated habitat being available. It is possible that very low numbers will use the grassland passing through to new areas. It is possible that they will use the stone walls in this way also.

8.1.3 Reptiles - impact characterisation

It is possible but unlikely that reptiles will be killed or injured as a result of the work.

There walls provide suitable hibernation habitat, however, they are not connected to any real suitable habitat for reptiles.

8.1.4 Reptiles - impact characterisation without mitigation

It is considered that in the absence of mitigation there would be a **probable minor short term adverse** impact at a **local (site)** level.

8.1.5 Reptiles - mitigation measures

As long as reptile presence is assumed and site clearance is undertaken in accordance with an appropriate method statement, it is considered that a full trapping and translocation exercise is not required, and that habitat manipulation and denial is an appropriate method of ensuring that reptiles are not harmed during the site clearance.

Therefore, the following measures will be adopted:

- Clearance will be conducted in accordance with a Method Statement to ensure that should reptiles be found in the course of site clearance or any other development activity, they will not be harmed and can be adequately cared for
- Clearance will only be undertaken during the reptile active season (April-October, inclusive);

- Clearance outwith this period is possible, but depends on weather and temperatures being suitable to ensure that reptiles are likely to be active;
- There will be no clearance of hibernation habitat outwith the active season;
- Reptiles will be excluded from entering or re-entering the site during clearance/operational phase of works by ensuring that the site is kept as bare ground i.e. clear of any vegetation or other shelter

8.1.6 Reptiles - impact characterisation with mitigation

It is considered that there will be an **unlikely minor short term adverse impact** at a **local (site)** level as a result of the proposed development.

8.1.7 Reptiles - significance of the impact

Without mitigation

It is considered that the significance of the impact is **slight**.

With mitigation

It is considered that the significance of the impact is **neutral**.

8.2 INVERTEBRATES

8.2.1 Summary

A brief habitat assessment indicated that the site can provide some limited habitat for common species of invertebrate.

8.2.2 Invertebrates - evaluation

No invertebrates are protected by legislation with the exception of the large blue butterfly (*Phengaris arion*); this species is not found in this region and will therefore not be considered further. Other species of invertebrate are listed on Schedule 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and are therefore of a **high national (Welsh)** ecological importance. Of these, the marsh fritillary butterfly (*Euphydryas aurinia*) is present in good numbers in the area surrounding the development site with the Blaen Cynon SAC being designated for its presence.

The food plant for the marsh fritillary butterfly (Devil's-bit scabious – *Succisa pratensis*) is not present on the site.

Overall the site appears to be of a generally **low** value to invertebrates as the dominant habitat type amenity hard standing. It is considered that the scrub and grassland may provide some habitat, however, species diversity at these locations are also low.

8.2.3 Invertebrates - impact characterisation

It is probable that the site clearance will result in the loss of habitats suitable for this group and that slow moving species may be killed or injured during the clearance.

8.2.4 Invertebrates - impact characterisation without mitigation

It is considered that in the absence of mitigation there would be a **probable moderate short term adverse** impact at a **local (site)** level.

8.2.5 Invertebrates - mitigation measures

Therefore, the following measures will be adopted:

- Minimisation of vegetation removal through design;
- A phased site clearance to ensure that not all the habitat is cleared at once;

8.2.6 Invertebrates - impact characterisation with mitigation

It is considered that there will be an **unlikely minor short term adverse impact** at a **local (site)** level as a result of the proposed development.

8.2.7 Invertebrates - significance of the impact

Without mitigation

It is considered that the significance of the impact is **slight**.

With mitigation

It is considered that the significance of the impact is **neutral**.

9 CONCLUSION

A number of habitats were identified at 2 Somerset Lane, Cefn-Coed-Y-Cymmer, Merthyr Tydfil. Of the habitats identified, it was determined that the majority were of a low ecological value.

Overall, it is concluded that the site is of a low ecological value at a local site level.

The presence of reptiles and amphibians should be assumed in very small numbers, however, this is considered unlikely

The presence of breeding birds in scrub should be assumed between March and August

This report will need to be updated on consultation with the Local Planning Authority Ecologist.

Mitigation will be required as described in the individual sections above.

10 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A - PHOTOS











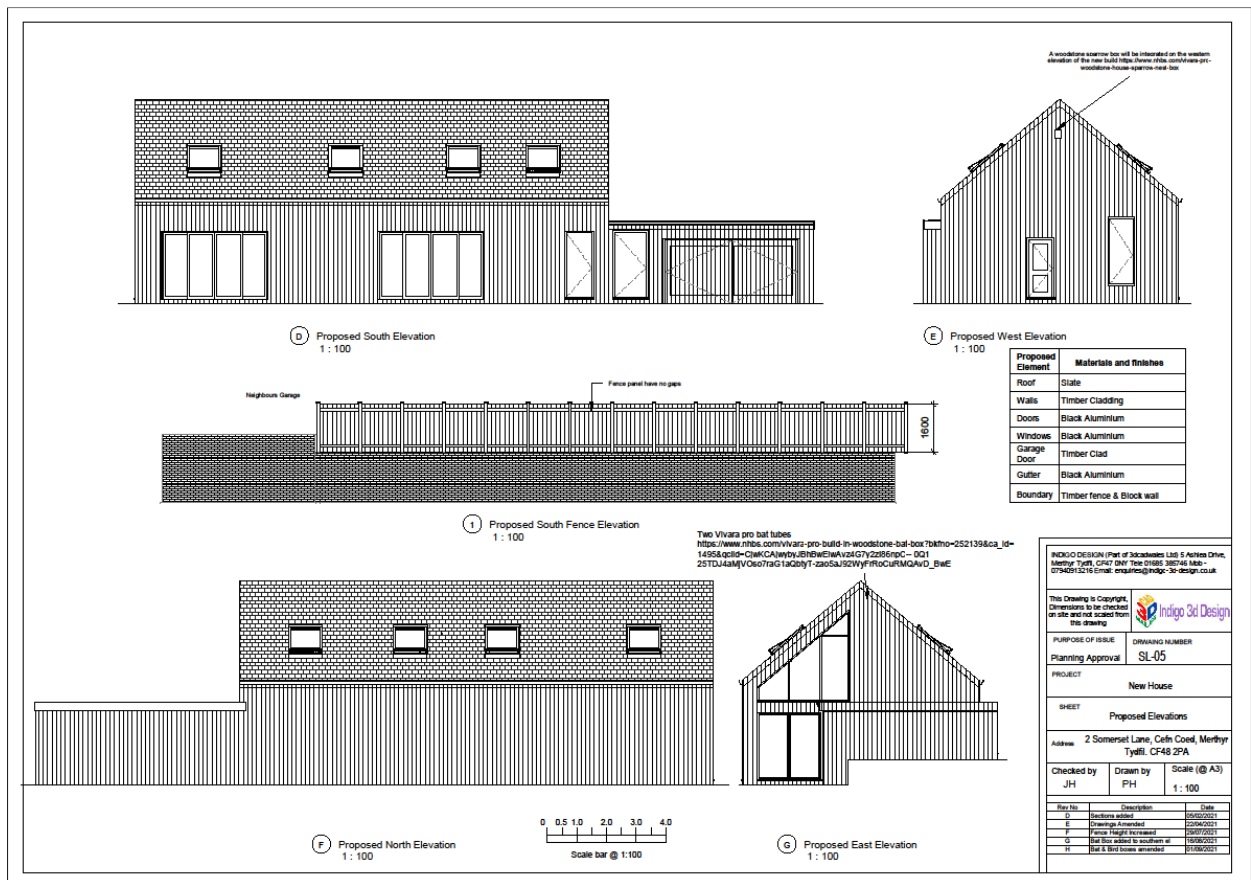








APPENDIX B – DRAWING SHOWING ENHANCEMENTS



11 METHOD STATEMENT

1. A suitably licenced and experienced ecologist will be on site/call for the duration of the works.
2. Before any work begins on site, a briefing for contractors and other site-staff 'toolbox talk' will be given by an ecologist. The briefing will cover the issues in respect of protected species they may encounter on site, where they might find them, methods of working, and what they need to know to avoid committing an offence. Every briefing attendee will be provided with a copy of a Method Statement and the contact details of an ecologist and Natural Resources Wales.
3. Before any work commences, the ivy on the exterior of the building will be checked by the ecologist for the presence of bats and birds.
4. All suitable bat roosting features will need to be removed by hand ((roof tiles) and inspected by the onsite bat ecologist.
5. The tiles will also need to be removed manually, one at a time, with the bed and underside inspected for bats/sign of bats by the onsite ecologist before moving onto the next.
6. Only when the onsite bat ecologist is happy that there is no further potential for bats, may he/she leave and the works continue with no supervision. A licensed bat ecologist will be on call for the remainder of the works. In the unlikely event that bats are found during a period that the licensed bat ecologist is not present on site, all works must cease and the licenced bat ecologist engaged.
7. If bats or their signs are found, a EPS licence may be required before works can legally resume.

