

Habitat Management Plan

Land Opposite Nos 47-50 Mardy Street, Twynyrodyn, Merthyr Tydfil

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Habitat Management Plan has been written by Ethos Environmental Planning and relates to an approved planning permission for construction of two houses at the above site (planning ref: P/19/0270). Specifically, this plan provides information in relation to planning condition 6 which states:

No development of site clearance shall take place until a Habitat Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plan shall include:

- a. An appropriate scale plan showing "Wildlife Protection Zones" where construction activities are restricted and where protective measures will be installed or implemented;*
- b. Details of protective measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid impacts during construction;*
- c. A timetable to show phasing of construction activities to avoid periods of the year when sensitive wildlife could be harmed (such as nesting bird season).*

All construction activities shall be implemented with the approved details and timing of the plan.

- 1.2 An ecological walkover of the site was undertaken by Ethos on 6th December 2023 which informs this plan.

2. Site Information

- 2.1 The site is comprised of tussocky, unmanaged grassland with ruderal vegetation. Several areas of fly-tipping and debris were present on site. The eastern site boundary includes several semi-mature hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) trees and standing deadwood that is covered with ivy (*Hedera helix*). Several willow (*Salix spp*) trees are present at the western site boundary and extend into the wider landscape.
- 2.2 The habitats on site are considered to be suitable for reptiles and nesting birds, given the tussocky grassland, micro-climate topography variations, connections to the wider landscape and dense shrub habitats on the trees on the site boundaries.



Photo 1 Site from eastern boundary



Photo 2 Eastern boundary view



Photo 3 Northern boundary view



Photo 4 Northern boundary view

3. Wildlife Protection Zones

- 3.1 Given the current habitats on site, construction activities will be restricted, and protective measures will be installed across the site in various capacities, creating two 'Wildlife Protection Zones' (WPZ) as per the map below.
- 3.2 The eastern boundary of the site will comprise a nesting bird WPZ that will require various mitigation, as detailed below. The rest of the site will comprise a reptile WPZ that will require various mitigation, as detailed below.



Figure 1 Wildlife Protection Zones

4. Wildlife Protection Zone for Birds

4.1 In order to avoid impacts on birds present on site, the following precautions will be undertaken:

- Any scrub or tree management/removal both during and post-construction should be undertaken outside the breeding bird season (March to September inclusive) or following a precautionary nesting bird survey by a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE) to ensure compliance with legal obligations.
- If scrub or tree management/removal occurs during the breeding bird season, then the ECoW will remain on site to check all potential nesting areas for birds before works are to be undertaken on site.
- If active bird nests are identified during the survey, a buffer zone should be set up by the SQE around the nest until all young birds have fledged and left the area.

5. Wildlife Protection Zone for Reptiles

5.1 In order to avoid impacts on reptiles present on site, the following precautions will be undertaken:

- A toolbox talk will be given to all contractors by the Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) prior to works commencing, which will include key features for identification of UK reptile and amphibian species and instructions regarding sympathetic working practices.
- All areas to be cleared will be searched by the ECoW, potential natural and artificial refugia removed and any faunal species carefully moved by hand to the hibernacula, which will be created in advance along the western site boundary.
- All vegetation within the proposed construction site footprint will be cut to ~15 cm height during the reptile active season (March – October inclusive). Habitat clearance will begin at the eastern end of the site and progress towards the western end.
- Vegetation requiring removal which is considered suitable for reptiles (i.e. scrub, grassland, ruderal vegetation) will be destructively searched by the ECoW. This will involve carefully checking within and underneath any suitable refugia such as leaf piles, logs, tree trunks, small mammal burrows and rubble.
- Any reptiles or amphibians (excluding GCN) found will be moved to the hibernacula in the west of the site to allow for safe reptile movement across the connected landscape.
- Following a 24-hour period, the vegetation will be cut down to the ground and maintained to a short sward until commencement of construction. Again, the grassland will be cleared working from east to west.

6. Timing of Sensitive Works

- 6.1 The initial vegetation removal will likely focus on the dense vegetation and trees to remove the suitable bird nesting habitat; as this will likely occur within breeding bird season, these works will be supervised by the ECoW, and any amendments or alternations necessary will be made when required, based on the confirmed timing of works.
- 6.2 Subsequent vegetation clearance of suitable reptile habitat will commence at the same time, or earlier if there has been a sustained period of mild weather and reptiles are likely to be active.

7. General good practise mitigation measures

- 7.1 The following section details general good practise measures which will be adopted during the entire construction process. It will be the responsibility of the site manager to ensure that all staff are inducted and made aware of these recommendations.

Dust generation

- 7.2 Generation of dust will be mitigated by wetting down and/or the use of screening if appropriate. This will avoid dust deposition on sensitive habitats such as the retained boundary habitats and Berry Brook to the south of the site.

Excavations and trenches

- 7.3 All excavations and trenches will either be covered at night or include an escape ramp to prevent nocturnal species such as badger and hedgehog from becoming trapped. This could be in the form of a roughened plank of wood. The trenches/pits will be inspected each morning to ensure no badgers have been trapped.

Open pipework

- 7.4 Open pipework larger than 150mm outside diameter will be blanked off at the end of each working day to avoid nocturnal mammals entering the pipes and potentially becoming trapped or injured.

Contractors materials and hazardous waste

- 7.5 All chemicals and hazardous materials and waste will be stored in line with best practice guidelines, ensuring they are secure and cannot be accessed by roaming animals. No materials will be stored within the biodiversity protection zone.

Sympathetic working practices

- 7.6 The following will be implemented:
- Avoid creating potential refuges. Reptiles will use stacked materials such as wood, stone, boards or metal sheets as refugia. Keep the site tidy and store materials off the ground, for example on pallets where possible;
 - Store materials away from areas of vegetation which are considered suitable for reptiles;
 - Should it be necessary to store materials such as topsoil on site then the stockpile should be smoothed to prevent access by faunal species into potential cavities;
 - Staff should simply demonstrate awareness when working and moving materials. Should an animal be found it should be gently moved, for example in a clean bucket, to a suitable location within habitat well away from the working area.

8. Timetable of Works

- 8.1 The below table details what habitats will require sensitive management and mitigation measures in which months of the year. The months that require mitigation measures include the active nesting season of birds and active season for reptiles (shown in orange). Any works undertaken outside of these works will not require mitigation measures to be employed across the site (shown in green).

Table 1 Months require mitigation measures for habitat works

Works	Months											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bird habitat management												
Reptile habitat management												

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 To conclude, the site has been deemed suitable for reptiles and nesting birds from the 6th December 2023 ecological walkover that was undertaken. Mitigation measures have been put in place to ensure that protected species are safeguarded from any potential impacts due to the development. If these measures are followed, it has been determined that there will be no significant impacts on any potential protected species on site.