



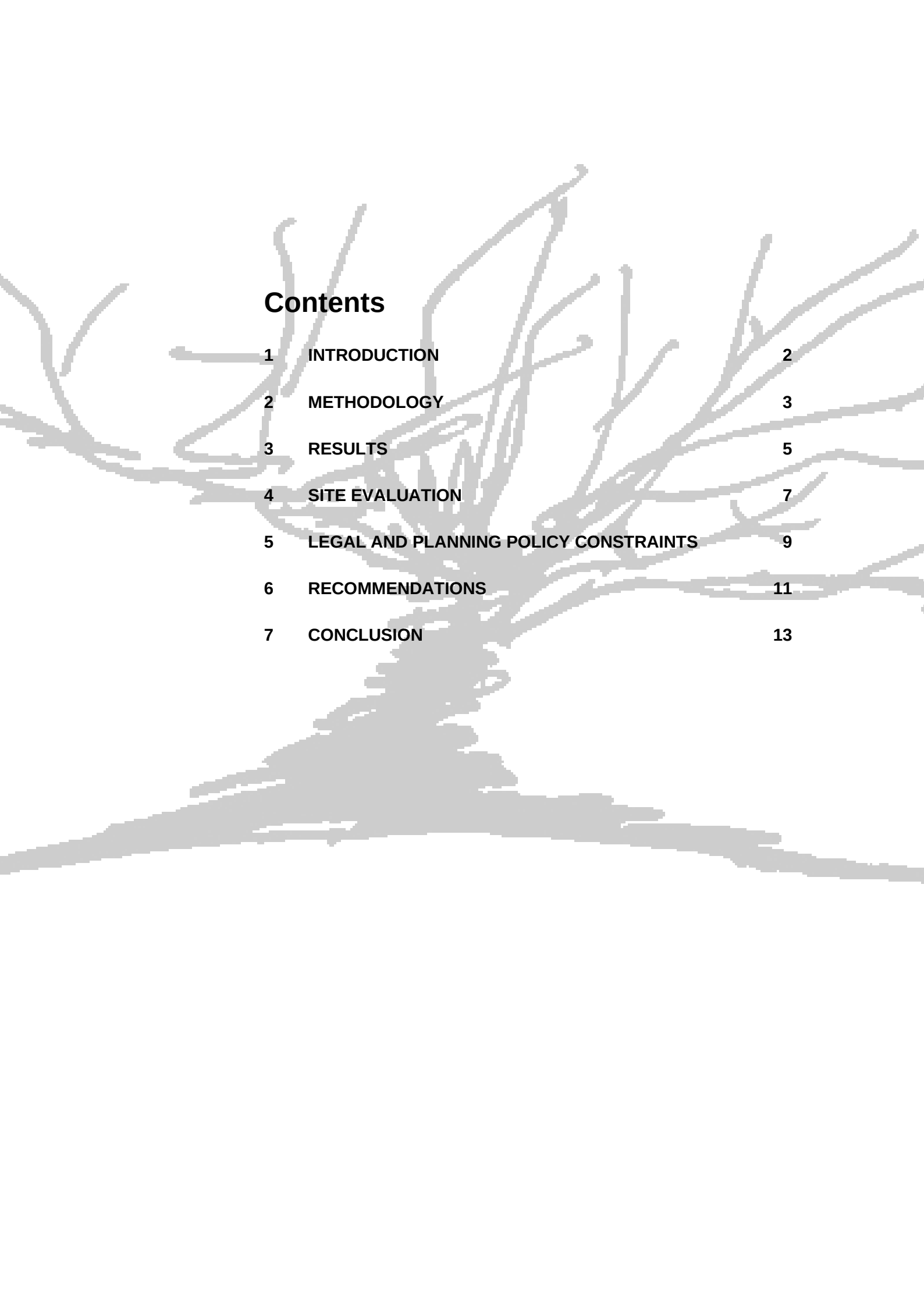
ECOLOGY WALKOVER REPORT

LAND ADJACENT TO
SUNNYBANK

For:

PHILIP GRIFFITHS

Project: Sunnybank		
Project Number	J009	
Title	Ecology Walkover Report	
Document Number	L009- Eco Report-V1.3	
Client	Philip Griffiths	
Issue Date	01/10/2020	
Prepared by:	David Price / Jenny O'Neill	
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ECOLOGICAL LAND DESIGNATION	
There are no statutory designated sites within 2km of the site that will be directly or indirectly impact by the development.	
HABITATS	
The site is considered to be, of low ecological value. The habitat on site with the highest ecological values is the scrub.	
PROTECTED SPECIES	
ARBORICULTURE	No mature trees on site – Negligible Impact
BATS	No potential for bats – No Impact
BADGERS	No badgers on site – No Impact
REPTILES	Low potential for reptiles – Potential Low Impact
BIRDS	The area may be used by a small number of commoner birds - impacts negated through mitigation - Potential low Impact
CONCLUSION	
Providing the recommended mitigation measures are adopted, relevant legislation will not be contravened and ecological issues will not preclude the development.	



1 INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 Sylvan Ecology were commissioned to carry out an ecology walkover, at land adjacent to Sunnybank. The proposed development site comprises of approximately 300 m² of dense scrub and introduced shrubs. The site is bordered by residential properties.

Ecological Context

- 1.2 The site is located in Heolgerrig, a small village in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough. All associated land for the development (herein referred to as the site) is located at:
- Central OS grid reference: SO 03410 06270
 - Postcode: CF48 1RY

- 1.3 The surrounding landscape is predominantly residential properties, the greater surrounding landscape consists of residential properties, industrial units, agricultural with pastoral and arable fields, there are also large sections of woodland (some of which could be ancient) and a relatively intact network of hedgerows.

Aims of Study

- 1.4 The aims of the study are to:
- determine the types of habitat that are present within the site;
 - assess the likely presence of protected species and species of principal importance for nature conservation within the site;
 - identify any potential ecological constraints to development within the site;
 - identify requirements for any additional ecological surveys needed to determine potential ecological impacts; and
 - describe measures to mitigate or compensate for any impacts on the ecological interest of the site.



2 METHODOLOGY

Desk Study

2.1 Existing ecological and nature conservation data relevant to the site were collated from various sources:

- The Magic website (<http://www.magic.gov.uk/>) was reviewed to determine whether there are any internationally important statutory designated sites for nature conservation, and for other statutory designated sites for nature conservation, within 5 miles of the site;
- Google Earth was used to review aerial photographs of the site and surrounding area in order to better understand the setting and ecological context of the site; and
- A data request from a local record centre is often undertaken to establish the impact of the development on known species and habitats off-site. Considering the nature of the development site, it is considered unlikely that this development will have any impact on the environment outside the footprint off the works. As a result a background data check was considered unnecessary for this particular site.

Field Survey

2.2 An ecology walkover was undertaken in accordance with the methodology set out in JNCC, 2010¹ by David Price MCIEEM in August 2020. The survey was carried out under optimal weather conditions, so the ground was soft enough to identify species specific prints.

2.3 The survey involved a site walkover of the area falling within site boundary shown on the map in Appendix A, in order to map the main habitat types present. Detailed target notes were made in relation to any notable features considered important to the ecology of the site: these are referred to by the prefix TN in order to assist cross-reference to the habitat map provided in Appendix A.

2.4 The survey was extended to include assessment of the potential of the site to support protected or notable species. Although this approach

¹ JNCC (2010) *Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey - a technique for environmental audit*, Revised reprint 2010, JNCC. Peterborough



supports an initial analysis of the likely presence of protected or notable species, a comprehensive assessment may require specialist expertise and/or season-critical survey techniques, which fall beyond the scope of this study. The presence of protected species was noted where possible, but walkthrough surveys cannot usually confirm species presence or absence; only the likelihood of presence can be assessed.

- 2.5 This is a standard technique for obtaining baseline ecological information for areas of land, including proposed development sites.
- 2.6 The dominant and readily identifiable higher plant species identified in each of the various habitat parcels were recorded and their abundance was assessed on the DAFOR scale:
- D: Dominant
 - A: Abundant
 - F: Frequent
 - O: Occasional
 - R: Rare
 - L: Locally, appended to any of the above five categories to reflect local distribution within the site.
- 2.7 (These scores represent the abundance within the defined area only and do not reflect national or regional abundances).
- 2.8 Additionally, incidental records of fauna were also made during the survey and the habitats identified were evaluated for their potential to support legally protected species and other species of conservation concern, including Biodiversity Action Plan Priority species.

Limitations

- 2.9 The field survey was conducted at an optimal time of year for botanical recording. However, it cannot be discounted that further species may be present later in the year, that were not apparent at the time of survey. Nonetheless, the purpose of this report is not to compile a comprehensive species list but to establish habitat type and potential ecological constraints. Due to the nature of the site, it is considered that sufficient information was gathered for the purposes of this assessment.



3 RESULTS

Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

3.1 A map showing the habitats present within the proposed development site is given in Appendix A. Photographs depicting the main ecological features may be found below.

3.2 Two habitat types were identified within, or on the boundary of the site, as follows:

- Introduced shrubs.
- Continues scrub

Habitats

Continues scrub

3.3 Continues scrub extending from unmanaged hedgerow, species composition is dominated by bramble, with occasional willow, sycamore and ash young trees and saplings. There are also locally occasional Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*) and stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*).

Plate 1: Image of Continues scrub



Introduced shrubs

3.4 A section of the boundary habitat includes an unmanaged, cypress spp hedge. The hedge its less then 20m between nodes and therefore does



not meet the UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat Description of a hedgerow, so has been classified as Introduced shrubs.

Plate 2: *Image of Continues scrub with hedgerow.*



Fauna

3.5

The following species' evidence of their presence were incidentally recorded during the course of the survey:

- Blackbird



4 SITE EVALUATION

Baseline Evaluation Criteria

- 4.1 Based on the site survey results, an ecological evaluation of the site was undertaken using a combination of evaluation criteria for habitats and species, although the general framework follows that provided by CIEEM (IEEM, 2006) (see Table 1 below).
- 4.2 Where relevant the evaluation was made with reference to the statutory protection afforded to species and habitats.
- 4.3 Legal protection does not always correspond to conservation value. Some species (e.g. badgers) are protected for reasons of animal welfare rather than conservation. Others are of national conservation value but are not protected by law (e.g. some Red Data Book species and UK BAP species).

Table 1: Determination of ecological value.

Ecological Value	Description and examples
High	Habitats or features that have high importance for nature conservation, such as statutory designated nature conservation sites of international or national importance or sites maintaining viable populations of species of international or national importance
Medium	Sites designated at a county or district level, e.g. Local Wildlife Site (LWS), ancient woodland site, ecologically 'important' hedgerows or ecological features that are notable within the context of a region, county or district
Low	Sites of nature conservation value within the context of a parish or neighbourhood, low-grade common habitats, such as arable fields and improved grasslands and sites supporting common, widespread species

Table 2: Summary of Ecological Evaluation of the Habitats on the Site.

Habitat	Reason for Valuation
Low Value	
Dense scrub	Common habitat type, limited in extent and species-poor. Provides potential for nesting birds.
Introduced shrubs	Common habitat type, limited in extent and species-poor. Provides potential for nesting birds.



Site evaluation

4.4

The site is considered to be, of low ecological value. The habitat on site with the highest ecological values is the scrub. This is considered to be of value at the zone-of-influence only, i.e. site level.



5 LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONSTRAINTS

UK and Local BAP Habitats

- 5.1 One potential priority habitats occur within the search area of the site; hedgerows. However, the hedge is now essentially defunct, its less then 20m between nodes and therefore does not meet the UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat Description of a hedgerow.

Bats

- 5.2 There are no trees or buildings on site with the potential to support bats being impacted by works. Streetlights are present along farm road surrounding the site; therefore the potentially impacted habitat is directly lit. As a result, it's very unlikely any additional lighting from the works will have a negative impact on bats. All bat species are fully protected under *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017*. Taken together, this makes it an offence to intentionally or deliberately capture, kill or injure or disturb bats (whether in a roost or not), and intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to their roosts.

Birds

- 5.3 Although no nests were noted during the site visit, the site, offers nesting opportunities for birds on site. Birds, their eggs and active nests are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*, as amended, with the exception of a number of species considered as pests. This protection includes the birds themselves. Their nests are also protected from damage or destruction, both whilst the birds are constructing and using them. To reduce the likely impact on birds, mitigation measures will be introduced to ensure the conservation of nesting birds (see recommendations for mitigation).

- 5.4 Assuming that the recommended precautionary mitigation measures will be adopted (See section 6: Recommendations), it is not anticipated birds will preclude the sites development.

Wild mammals

- 5.5 No mammal signs were noted during the survey, however, the site may be used by other wild mammals such as hedgehogs, which, as of 2007,



has been added to the UK BAP priority species list, on account of its rapid decline. Recommendations for mitigation are provided below.

- 5.6 Wild mammal species are currently given limited protection under the *Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996*. This makes it an offence to intentionally cause this species unnecessary suffering by certain methods, including crushing and asphyxiation.

Reptiles

- 5.7 Reptiles prefer to reside in areas with a network of longer vegetation (for cover) adjacent to suitable basking habitat such as shorter vegetation and hard standing. In addition, reptiles like to hibernate in complex structures such as hedge banks, which are sheltered from the elements and less susceptible to fluctuations in weather conditions. Suitable reptile habitat occurs adjacent to the site and potentially within the scrub..
- 5.8 All British reptiles are protected under the *Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981*, as amended, from killing and injury. Following the revision of the UKBAP priority species list in 2007, all native reptile species are now listed as UK priority species. It is therefore recommended that specific mitigation work for reptiles be undertaken (see mitigation).



6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Breeding bird habitat

- 6.1 Although it is recommended that every effort be made to design existing habitats into the new development, wherever practicable, the loss of some nesting bird habitat may occur to accommodate the development. It is recommended that clearance of nesting bird habitat should be undertaken in the period August to February inclusive. Should it prove necessary to remove any breeding bird habitat during the breeding season, the area should be checked in advance for the presence of birds' nests. Once checked, if there is no evidence of breeding birds, clearance work should be completed within 48 hours of inspection. If any active nests are found in this area then vegetation clearance must cease and an appropriate buffer zone should be established. This buffer must be left intact until it has been confirmed that the young have fledged and the nest is no longer in use.

Reptiles

- 6.2 Reptile and amphibians typically hibernate at/or beneath ground level where temperatures are more constant. It is not necessary to entirely and permanently remove reptiles from the site, only to ensure that injury is not caused to individuals by the works. It is likely that reptiles will forage around the shrubs and scrub around the perimeter of the site.
- 6.3 A simple means of making the site unsuitable for reptiles is habitat manipulation. All grassy areas suitable for reptile basking and foraging affected by the proposed works (regardless of their location) should be strimmed to ground-level (under supervision by a suitably qualified ecologist) to make them unsuitable for reptiles and all suitable refugia removed. A strimming regime over 2 weeks would discourage reptiles from work areas so that they avoid injury during works to reptiles as detailed in Table 3. Once the area has been strimmed to ground level and all potential refugia removed then reptiles are extremely unlikely to be present in the area and top soil should be stripped or moved.

Table 3: habitat manipulation for reptiles

Week Number	Habitat Manipulation
1	Strimming to 15 mm from ground level to encourage reptiles to move from the area.
2	Strimming to ground level and subsequent top soil stripping.



For non-grassy areas, i.e. woody habitats, all areas affected by the proposed works (regardless of their location) should be inspected by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to the topsoil being stripped.

Wild Mammals

6.4

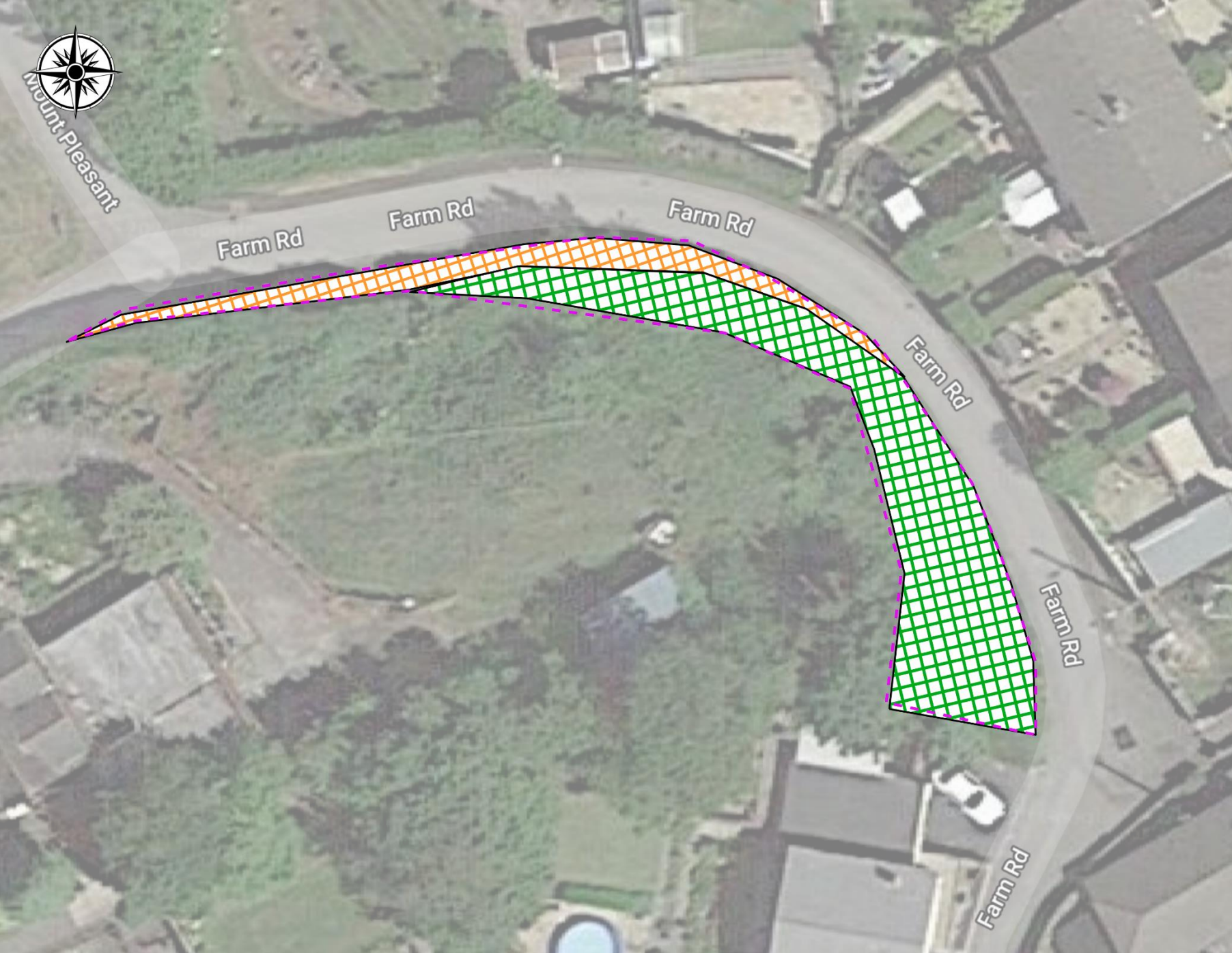
It is recommended that good building practices are adopted during the construction phase to safeguard any individual animals which venture onto the proposed development area. Such practices would include covering of all deep holes and trenches overnight and/or the provision of planked escape routes for any trapped wildlife.



7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Providing the recommended mitigation measures are adopted, relevant nature conservation legislation will not be contravened, ecological impacts of the development will be reduced to a minimum and ecological issues are not, based upon the available information, anticipated to preclude the sites development.

APPENDIX A: Habitat Map



Tel: 07897558390
www.SylvanEcology.com
E-mail: david.price@SylvanEcology.com

LEGEND

-  Introduced shrubs
-  Dense scrub
-  Site boundary

PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP

Land adjacent to Sunnybank,
Heolgarreg, Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 1RY

Date: Sep 2020	Drawn by: D.P. © Google Earth Data
Scale:	Drawing N°: v1.1



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