



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

BLAEN Y GARTH FARM, MERTHYR TYDFIL

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL

ASSESSMENT

MAY 2025

ISSUE 1VA

LAND AT BLAEN Y GARTH MERTHYR TYDFIL

Ecological Assessment

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

A preliminary ecological assessment was undertaken of Blaen Y Garth Farm in order to support an application for variation of condition 1 of planning permission P/16/0094 to extend the time period for the commencement of development (a further 5 years) at Blaen-y-Garth Farm Blaen-y-garth Access Road Pant Merthyr Tydfil CF48 2UY

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 habitats on and adjacent to the site comprise of semi-improved grassland, defunct hedgerow and buildings.

Boundary trees will be retained in their entirety. However, should any require removal, further surveys of the trees will be required to assess their suitability for roosting bats as some of the trees do have potential for this group. It is probable that bats will forage over the site and use the site boundaries as commuting routes.

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 ephemeral ponds present within the site (two) however, the ponds are dry throughout the breeding season. In addition to this, the grassland on the site is largely overgrazed and unlikely to provide suitable habitat for this group.

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. There is a hole beneath a fence adjacent to an old chicken coop, however, a fox was seen emerging from this whilst at the site undertaking bat surveys.

It should be assumed that all areas of scrub, hedgerow and trees will be utilised by nesting birds during the breeding season. It is unlikely that the site will be used by ground nesting species due to disturbance present on the site (in excess of 40 horses).

The site provides reptiles with some potential habitat for foraging, basking and sheltering purposes, particularly around the interface of the site. There may be some hibernation habitat in the stone boundaries of the site.

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 at Blaen Y Garth Farm, Merthyr Tydfil. Blaen Y Garth Farm is situated to the north of Merthyr Tydfil, just outside of the Brecon Beacons National Park. The site is accessed from the southern end, just off the Brecon Mountain Railway Line.

There is a farmhouse present here with an associated building. There appears to have been some clearance surrounding the farmhouse. There are no roofs present on the buildings and now the buildings are stone walls only.

There is a large brash pile, spoil heap and stone heap present from where the site appears to have been cleared following receipt of the original planning consent.

A number of fields surround the farmhouse that are heavily grazed. The boundaries are made up of a mixture of fencing, stone walls, and some defunct hedges.

Immediately north are a number of disused quarries, a woodland and some streams. All of these habitats are outside of the red line boundary.

The wider landscape comprises of agricultural land to the south-east, housing to the south, and the railway line to the south-west.

1.4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposals are currently as follows:



1.1 STUDY AREA

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

2 LEGISLATION & POLICIES

2.1 Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) provides safeguards for European Protected Species (those listed under Annex IV Habitats Directive). With regards to bats, this makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately (or recklessly in Scotland) capture, injure or kill a bat
- Deliberately (or recklessly in Scotland) disturb a bat in a way that would (significantly in Scotland) affect its ability to survive, breed or rear young (or hibernate or migrate in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or (significantly in England, Wales and Scotland) affect the local distribution or abundance of the species.
- Damage or destroy a roost (this is an 'absolute' offence)
- Possess, control, transport, sell, exchange or offer for sale/exchange any live or dead bat or any part of a bat

2.2 Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is the legislation for England and Wales for nature conservation, making it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat at a roost
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a roost

2.3 PLANNING POLICY WALES (EDITION 12, FEBRUARY 2024)

The following sections are relevant

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;

2.4 BUILDING WITH NATURE

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

2.5 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.

2.6 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.

2.7 STATE OF NATURAL RESOURCES REPORT (SONARR)

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 [EWA] requires Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to publish a State of Natural Resources Report¹ (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
- Nutrient enrichment and pollution

2.8 NATURE RECOVERY PLAN

The Welsh Government launched the Nature Recovery Plan² (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

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=e>

3.0 PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY

3.1 SUMMARY

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

- Semi-improved grassland
- Building
- Defunct hedgerow
- Bare ground

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

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

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

3.2 BACKGROUND

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Registered in England and Wales, Company Number: 10409300

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 20th May 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.

3.3 METHODOLOGY

3.3.1 Field survey:

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

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

3.4 CONSTRAINTS

A data search was not undertaken. Data searches were undertaken for previous applications and previous consultancy reports are available for the site. It is considered that due to the habitats being affected, the survey data being available and up to date surveys being undertaken, that an up to date data search would not change the conclusions/recommendations in this report.

3.5 RESULTS

3.5.1 Habitats

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

- Semi-improved grassland
- Building
- Defunct hedgerow
- Bare ground
- Tall ruderal

Photos are located at **Appendix A**

3.5.1.1 Semi- Improved grassland

This habitat is found throughout the majority of the site. The habitat appears to be species poor and currently has an extremely short sward due to grazing pressures.

3.5.1.2 Building

There are two buildings present on the site. The buildings are derelict and all that is left of them are the four stone walls. There are some cracks and crevices present within the walls that may be suitable for roosting bats, however, it is likely that they fill with water during periods of heavy rainfall. It is possible that birds will make use of these cracks and crevices also. There are crows roosting within the old chimney of the farmhouse.

3.5.1.3 Ruderal

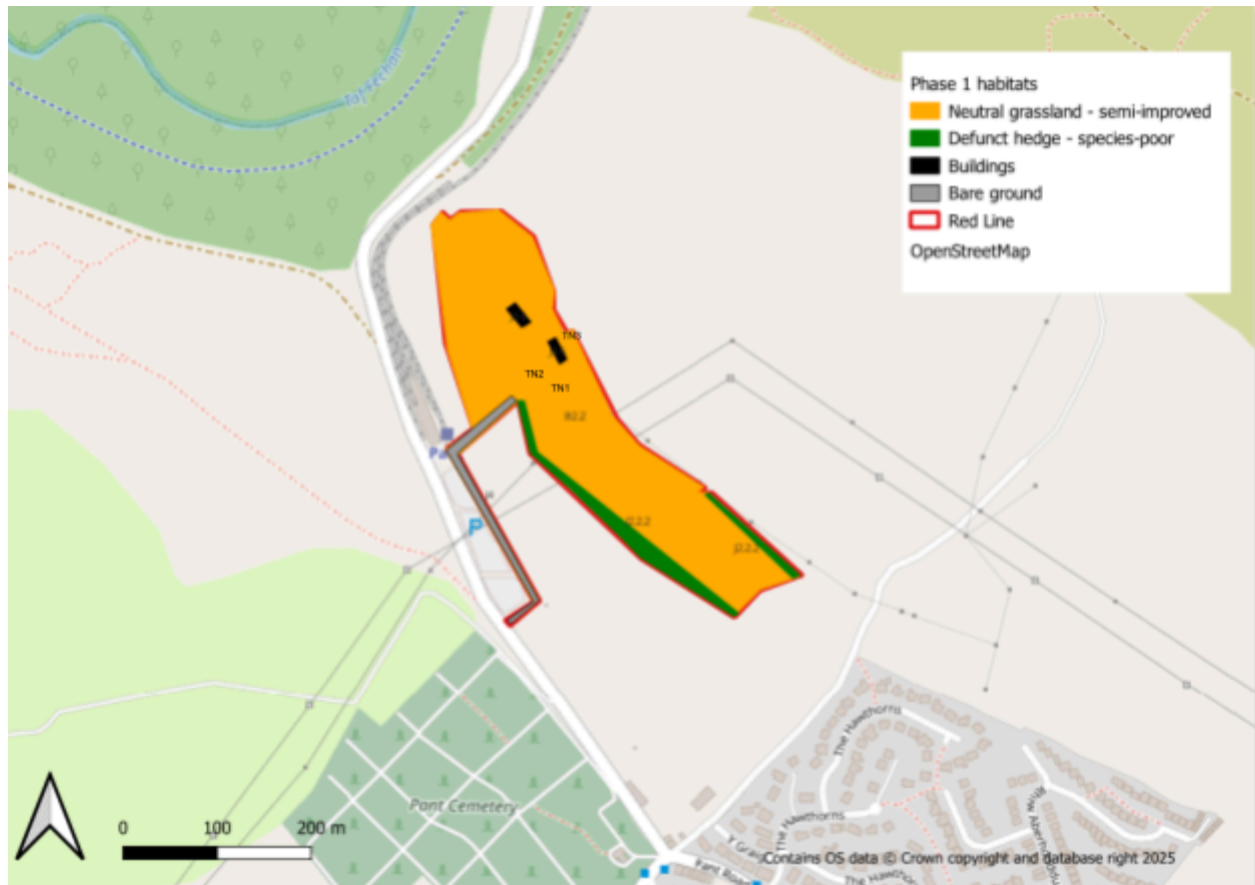
This habitat is present occasionally throughout the site where it is beginning to colonise the peripheries of the grassland. It is largely made up of nettle.

3.5.1.4 Bare ground

The access track is primarily made up of this habitat where vehicles have entered the site.

3.5.1.5 Defunct hedgerow

The boundaries are made up of overgrown defunct hedgerows. Rather than hedgerows with gaps, these are only small remnants of former hedgerows, with fences infilling the gaps. Species include blackthorn, ash and ivy.



3.5.2 Protected species assessment

3.5.2.1 Bats

Habitat suitability

The boundaries of the site are likely to have features within trees suitable for roosting bats, however, it has been confirmed that should development be permitted, these will be retained in their entirety.

It is likely that bats will use the site for foraging and commuting.

A survey undertaken of the buildings by Just Mammals in 2018 revealed that common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared, noctule, Natterer's, and a small myotis bat all commute and forage at the site.

Whilst the buildings do not have roofs, there are still some cracks and crevices within stonework that may be suitable for roosting bats. That said, it is likely that a lot of these fill up water during periods of rainfall. Nevertheless, the buildings were classed as being of low potential for roosting bats and as such a single survey was undertaken.

Surveyor information

The survey was run 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 Evans was assisted during the activity surveys by Gavin Vella and Nadine Morgan.

Internal and external inspection

An initial inspection survey was carried out in May 2025 to search all buildings, both 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 roof areas and fascia boards etc; where no safe access was available the survey was conducted using, close focus binoculars and/or a high powered lamp.

Activity surveys

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.

Survey 1- 20th May 2025

A dusk survey was carried out on 20th May 2025 using 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. IR cameras and thermal imaging devices.



Surveyor/camera locations

Thermal imaging field of views



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.

Activity surveys

The surveys were undertaken as per the table below:

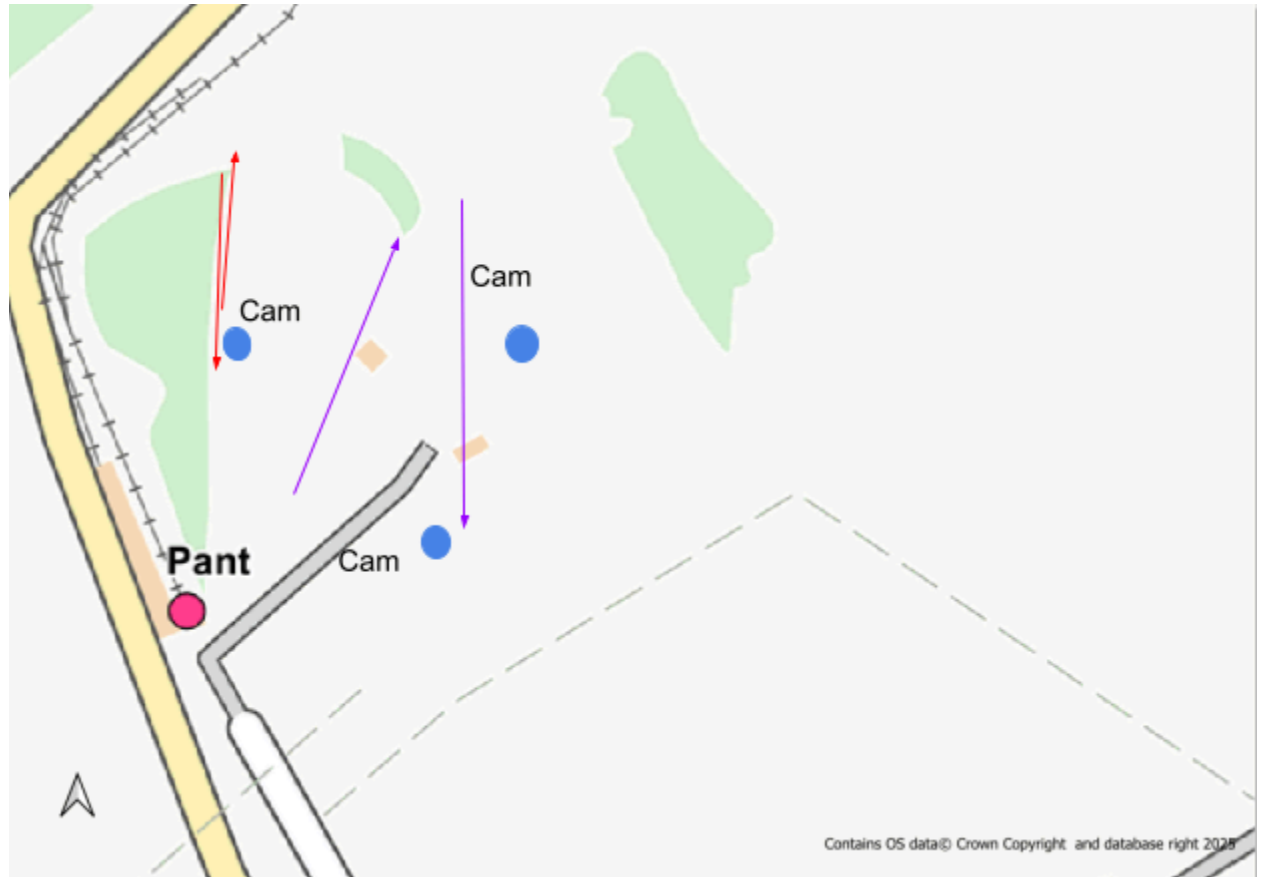
Table 1: Schedule and weather conditions

Visit	Date (sunrise) (sunset)	Start End	Time	Te mp C	Wind	Cloud Cover	Notes
Survey 1 20/05/25	21:08	Start End	20:50 22:40	14 14	Low Low	10% 15%	Dry evening, insects flying

Activity survey results

The first bat heard was a common pipistrelle, the bat was seen flying high in the sky from south to north approximately 15 minutes post sunrise. Species heard and seen on site include common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, noctule myotis sp., and greater horseshoe. The greater horseshoe bat was heard and seen commuting along the hedgeline to the north west. The bat came from the north. Activity was generally focussed around the boundaries of the site with the occasional common and soprano pipistrelle commuting over the buildings.

No bats emerged from nor interacted with the building under survey.



Identified flight lines: Greater horseshoe arrowed red; pipistrelle arrowed purple

Impacts without mitigation

The property was not identified as a bat roost on this date, therefore impacts on roosting bats are unlikely.

Negative impacts may include disturbance from construction works, loss of foraging habitat and light spill onto commuting corridors and roosting features within the adjacent trees

Mitigation

- All boundary trees will remain in situ
- Any additional lighting will be bat friendly and in line with current guidance.
- A lighting plan will be required to show that all boundaries remain unlit, particularly as greater horseshoe bats have been recorded using the boundaries of the site.

4.5.2.2 Amphibians & great crested newt

Habitat Assessment

There are no ponds present on the development site which could be used by this group for breeding purposes. Two ephemeral ponds were noted within the ownership boundary as per the 2014 Just Mammals Report, however, these ponds were not present between March and May. They do not appear to have held water for some time and are therefore unlikely to be suitable for breeding great crested newt.

In addition to this, the majority of grassland has a short sward due to being overgrazed and it is considered unlikely that great crested newt will be present.

Impacts without mitigation

N/A, great crested newt are unlikely to be affected by the proposed works.

Mitigation

All vegetation clearance will be undertaken in line with a method statement and ecological supervision to safeguard the unlikely presence of great crested newt.

3.5.2.3 Dormouse

Habitat suitability

There is suitable habitat within the ownership boundary (woodland and scrub), it is likely that if they were present the defunct hedgerows within the red line boundary will provide shelter, cover and a means of dispersal for dormice. All of the boundary vegetation will be retained.

Impacts without mitigation

Without mitigation, it is possible that if dormice are present, there may be indirect impacts as a result of site lighting if not appropriately mitigated for.

Mitigation

- All boundary trees will remain in situ
- Any additional lighting will be bat friendly and in line with current guidance.
- A lighting plan will be required to show that all boundaries remain unlit

3.5.2.4 Badgers

Habitat suitability

There is suitable habitat for foraging but due to the location, openness and nature of the site. There was no sign of badger throughout the survey. There is a single hole present along the northern boundary of the site, however, a fox was observed emerging from this during the bat surveys of the building.

Impacts without mitigation

N/A

Mitigation

If at any point, badgers, badger setts or evidence of badgers are found, all works will cease and the impacts reassessed.

3.5.2.5 Breeding birds

Habitat suitability

There is suitable habitat in the defunct hedgerows, buildings, stone walls and brash piles 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 (horses, walkers and dogs), the availability of avian predator perches and the presence of predators.

Impacts without mitigation

If suitable habitat is to be removed as part of the development, there may be a negative impact on nesting bird species as a result of the proposed development. Without mitigation there may be disturbance or damage of active nests and young.

Mitigation

All vegetation clearance/building clearance will be undertaken outside of the main nesting season (March- August) unless vegetation is checked by an appropriately qualified ecologist and the presence of nesting birds is disproven. If at any point a birds nest is identified, it will be left in situ until such a time the young have fledged the nest of their own accord.

3.5.2.6 Reptiles

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*) use the site. It is likely that small numbers of reptiles may be present on the interfaces between grassland habitat and longer vegetation, within brash piles and stone walls. Numbers are likely lower due to how overgrazed and disturbed the majority of the site is (horses).

Impacts without mitigation

Without mitigation the proposals will likely have a negative impact on reptiles, such as injury or death of individuals during construction, and loss of foraging and hibernation habitat.

Mitigation

A viable mitigation strategy, a method statement and ecological supervision will be required for the site.

3.5.2.7 Invertebrates.

Habitat assessment

It is likely that common and widespread invertebrates will utilise the site along with some section 7 species. It is likely that this is possibly reduced as a result of overgrazing and disturbance by horses.

Impacts without mitigation

It is considered that there will be a loss of breeding and foraging habitat for this group.

Mitigation

New species rich planting will be required.

4 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

BE Ecological Ltd was commissioned to undertake a preliminary ecological appraisal of the site.

This report will be valid for 24 months from the date of survey.

Any new site lighting will conform to the following guidance to prevent any indirect impacts on foraging bats

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

A lighting plan will be required to ensure that the boundaries of the site remain dark.

To safeguard the possible presence of reptiles in low numbers, site clearance in respect of reptiles will be undertaken in line with a method statement and ecological supervision as a precautionary approach. This will also benefit other species (e.g. amphibians and dormice) which may otherwise be affected by site clearance. A viable reptile mitigation strategy will be required.

All any vegetation/building clearance will be undertaken outside of the main nesting season (March- August) unless vegetation is checked by an appropriately qualified ecologist and the presence of nesting birds is disproven.

It is considered that no other ecological surveys are required.

Native species planting will be required as part of the new development.

Emorsgate EM2 wildflower seeds will be utilised within the landscape areas of the site. Enhancement will then include maintenance and management of a new this area to benefit both reptiles and invertebrates. A cut will be undertaken once or twice a year. Cuttings would be removed and used to create onsite compost areas (to benefit reptiles) and a hibernacula will be introduced into the grounds. The grass cutting regime would be designed to allow grasses and wildflowers to seed the area for the following season. These habitats will be cut twice per year using hand tools once in March/April and again no earlier than 15th July in order to mimic hay meadow management.

Bat and bird boxes will be required as an enhancement within the site.

It is suggested that a Landscape Ecological Management Plan is secured for the site.

The following conditions are already attached to the previous permission:

Condition 10- no development is to take place until details of soft and hard landscaping have been submitted and approved by the local planning authority

Condition 11- no development shall take place until a wildlife protection plan has been submitted and approved by the local planning authority.

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.

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.

5 REFERENCES

Bat Conservation Trust and the Institution of Lighting Professionals (2018) Bats and artificial lighting in the UK; Bats and the Built Environment series (Guidance Note 08/18), 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

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

APPENDIX A- SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

Plate 1- view of site looking east



Plate 2- example of small area of ruderal



Plate 3- Photograph of woodland to rear and brash piles



Plate 4- photograph of rubble pile, ruderal and cabins



Plate 5- photograph of buildings with no roof and bare ground drive



APPENDIX B- SPECIES LIST

Bramble, bracken, gorse, springy turf moss, hedge bindweed, rosebay willowherb, red common nettle, cocksfoot, perennial ryegrass, eared willow, ivy,, crested dogstail, broadleaved dock, curled dock, dandelion, silverweed, creeping buttercup, meadow buttercup, rosebay willowherb, Ash, hawthorn, hazel, blackthorn, Ivy, Species present include creeping buttercup, herb-robert common mouse-ear, ribwort plantain and self heal

APPENDIX C- TARGET NOTES

TN1= Brash piles

TN2- spoil heap

TN4- rubble piles