

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

To: David Cross
From: Matt Davies (Ecologist)
Ext: 5278

Memo number: 1

Date of Memo #-: -

Date: 28/07/2021

SUBJECT: P/21/0261 | PROVISION OF DWELLING (LIVE/WORK) TOGETHER WITH PARKING, LANDSCAPING AND ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENTS | LAND SOUTH OF UNIT 7 EFI INDUSTRIAL ESTATE MERTHYR TYDFIL CF47 8RB

Report submitted in support of the above application:

- Unit 7, EFU Industrial Estate, Merthyr Tydfil. Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report. Version 2, 17/06/2021. Elite Ecology.

Issues:

General

The report is unacceptable in its current form and requires rewriting. The issues are many and varied and include, but are not limited to, those highlighted below. In other words, the whole report needs to be re-considered, rather than just simply addressing the points below.

Executive Summary (page 3)

SEWBrEC data search – ‘*This had not arrived at the time of writing this report.*’ Is this sentence still meant to be included?

10m buffer proposed for Cwm Taf Fechan SINC – where exactly is the boundary for this? Is the 10m buffer all onsite, within the ownership of the applicant? Does the 10m buffer extend from the boundary of the adjacent and onsite SINC (see Figure 1). I think a plan showing the buffer in relation to both the site boundary and the SINC boundary would be useful for clarity. See also further comments later in this memo.

Hedgehogs – a means of escape is recommended, but not for otter? Hedgehog gap dimensions need to be specified (13cm x 13cm).

Biodiversity Net Gain – this system is not used in Wales (see later in the memo for further comments).

SEWBrEC – the unique reference number for the specific data search for this site must be included within the report. This is a standard request for any reports that contain biodiversity data.

DAFOR? This is referred to, but does not seem to have been used within the report?

1.2 Site description and works (page 5)

'Under the current proposals, more units are to be built on the site.'

Plans show a single residential house – see Appendix A. Clarification required.

Figure 2 (page 6)

Star symbol depicting site location is in the wrong place?

2.2 Field Survey (page 7)

*'Habitat Surveys can be carried out at any time of the year, with the **optimal time period** falling between the months of **April through until September**. This survey was carried out on **Tuesday February 2nd 2021**, which is **inside of the optimal time period** for flora surveys.'*

This doesn't seem to make sense regarding the optimal time period.

3.2 Non-Statutory Sites (page 8)

The distances are incorrect, e.g., the closest SINC to the site is Cwm Taf Fechan, which is both adjacent to the site and also *onsite* in certain areas (see Figure 1). Table in the report has Cwm Taf Fechan at 2896m from site? Clearly incorrect. All the data in Tables on pages 8-9 needs checking and adjusting where necessary.

3.5.1 Amphibians (page 9)

'... no records of amphibians were revealed by the search'. I don't think this is correct.

3.5.2 Birds (page 9)

78 bird species – is this meant to represent all species within the records, rather than just the priority species?

3.5.6 Invertebrates (page 10)

No marsh fritillary butterfly mentioned?

3.5.7 Mammals (page 10)

No mention of the closest mammal record for the site – European otter (c.21m)? NB the site is next to a river. No mention of badger or water vole or hedgehog here either.

3.5.9 Reptiles (page 10)

'...seven reptile species were revealed...'

Is this correct? 'Seven' species of reptile?

4. Field Survey (pages 11-12)

No mention of otter? No mention of marsh fritillary butterfly?

4.2.5 Hazel Dormouse (page 12)

'The habitats on site are not suitable for supporting any hazel dormouse specimens with the absence of any hedgerows.'

4.2.5 Hedgehogs (page 12)

*'The site itself contains suitable hibernation, commuting and foraging habitats for hedgehogs in the form of scattered trees **and hedgerow**.'*

There seems to be some ambiguity regarding the presence of hedgerows? Also, common dormice don't necessarily require a hedgerow, so I'm slightly confused by this statement.

In general, the report is a little light on interpretation. For example, no consideration of foraging and commuting bats? Is a transect survey appropriate? No consideration of otter (closest mammal record, in fact I think it's the closest record of a priority species). No real interpretation of the impacts on the adjacent/onsite SINC.

Other examples:

4.1.1 A2.1 – Dense scrub (page 11)

'This habitat has moderate protected species potential.'

This an example of the types of statements made in this report, but with no reasoning included?

4.1.2 A3.1 – Scattered trees (page 11)

'This habitat has moderate protected species potential.'

What does this mean? For example, do any of the trees have Potential Roost Features for bats?

4.2.6 Invertebrates (page 12)

'The site is not deemed to be of moderate value to invertebrates.'

Again, this needs to be explained?

5.3.1 Tree Planting (page 13)

Any planting onsite will be native species of local (if not Welsh) provenance. Cotoneaster species and Buddleja are both non-native invasives and will not be used.

5.3.2 Hedgehogs (page 15)

Mitigation included regarding trapped hedgehogs, but this also follows for other species (for example, otter and badger). Dimensions of gaps referred to should be specified (13cm x 13cm).

5.3.3 Bats (page 15)

Are transect surveys required in order to inform the lighting plan? If not, why?

Plans will be provided showing the preferred dark corridors.

5.4 Site Enhancements (page 17)

'These measures are optional ...'.

This is incorrect. Enhancements are 'required' in accordance with Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Full specifications for all proposed enhancement measures will be supplied and marked on all relevant plans/drawings for the site (including architects drawings). Integrated bat and bird boxes will be required.

5.5 Biodiversity Net Gain (page 18)

This is the approach taken in the English planning System and not relevant to Wales (here is it the Section 6 duty – Environment (Wales) Act 2016).

Appendix A: Site Plans (pages 21-22)

As referred to earlier – for clarity, a plan showing the buffer in relation to both the site boundary and the SINC boundary would be useful.

Appendix B: Ecological Data Search Species Lists (pages 23-38)

This appears to be a list of 'all' species within 2km without targeting priority species. This is a little limited. It's not acceptable to just list all species returned in the results of the biodiversity records search without undertaking an appropriate level of interpretation (as per previous comments in this memo).

Appendix C: Phase 1 Habitat Map (page 39)

No target notes, for example showing position of Japanese knotweed?

Appendix D: Site Photographs (pages 40-42)

These appear to show that large areas of the site have been stripped to bare earth.

Plate 1 and in particular Plate 5 appears to show grassland habitat not mapped. The grassland that can be seen in Plate 5 looks suitable for reptiles.

More and better site pictures showing the current state of the site are required and a re-interpretation regarding reptiles.

Appendix E: Biodiversity Legislation and Policy (pages 43-49)

Please check all legislation – no mention of 2019 CHSR amendment? Also, the legislation is geared towards the English Planning system. As the site is in Wales, the whole report should be reflective of this.

Appendix F: Bats and Artificial Light (page 510)

This information appears to be out of date. See here: <https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting>

NB A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal report provides the results of initial ecological surveys associated with a proposed development. The report is used to identify further ecological surveys necessary to inform an EclA, to identify ecological constraints to a project and make recommendations for design changes, and to highlight opportunities for ecological enhancement. It can be used as a scoping report (for non-EIA projects), but should not be submitted as part of a planning application unless it can be determined that the project would have no significant ecological effects, no mitigation is required and no further surveys are necessary; with the exception of such cases it should be superseded by an EclA.

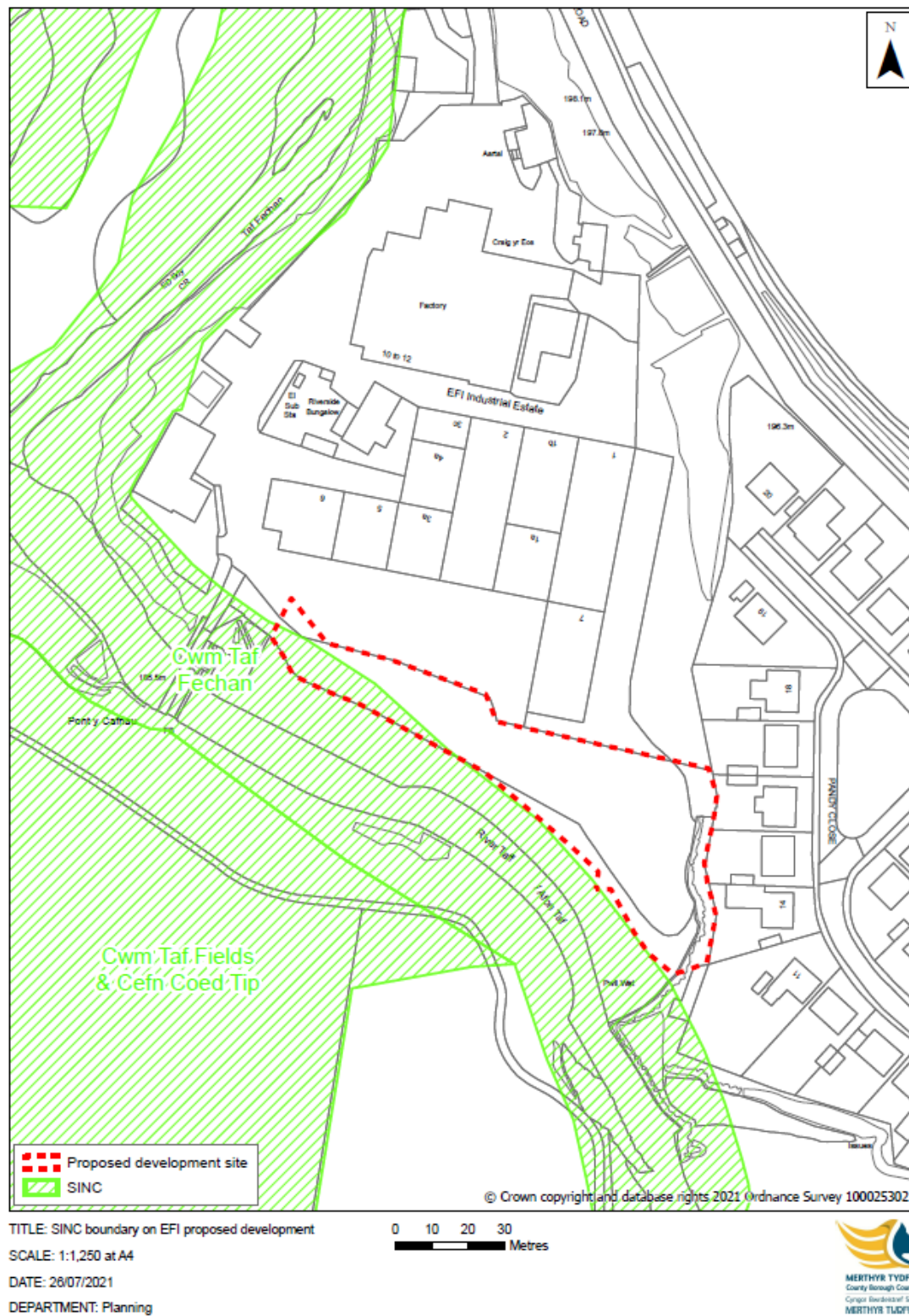


Figure 1 – Site boundary in relation to Cwm Taf Fechan SINC.