

Neath Port Talbot
Hospital
Baglan Way
Port Talbot
SA12 7BX



A **Preliminary**
Ecological Appraisal
By:



On **Behalf Of:**



March **2022**

Client	Swansea Bay University Health Board
Project Name	Neath Port Talbot Hospital, Baglan Way, Port Talbot SA12 7BX
Report Title	A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
File Reference	JM2522

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1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Additional facilities are required at the Neath Porth Talbot Hospital on Baglan Way, Port Talbot. It is proposed to construct a new two storey building for modular orthopaedic theatres, at the north-eastern corner. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the development area was commissioned to provide ecological information in line with relevant policy and legislation, and to inform the planning process. This comprised an ecological assessment of habitats and protected/priority species by an experienced ecologist in March 2022.
- 1.2 The development zone is small, and covers an area of approximately 0.1 hectares. It is largely composed of hardstanding surfaces and small strips of amenity grassland. In the wider area are access roads, car parking, and boundary zones of grassland, with a small groups of trees. The development area was assessed to be of negligible/low ecological value, with very limited features of interest supporting biodiversity. Flowering dandelions are attractive to invertebrate pollinators, but no other opportunities for nature are identified. The section of the main hospital building where the new structure will attach and link was assessed, and no features are noted of relevance to protected species (bats and birds). No impacts for habitats or species were identified and no additional targeted survey effort is recommended.
- 1.3 A record search was conducted. There were no historic records for priority habitats and species at or in close proximity to the proposed development. The dataset did not identify the historic presence of species which result in constraints for the proposed development.
- 1.4 To meet planning policy, as indicated by Planning Policy Wales 11 and Future Wales, recommendations to provide enhancements for biodiversity are specified with a new planting of native vegetation known to be beneficial for wildlife around a new outdoor seating area in this part of the hospital site. A landscape design close to the new building is also provided in this report.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 Just Mammals Limited was commissioned by Swansea Bay University Health Board to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) for a part of the Neath Port Talbot Hospital site, where a new two storey modular orthopaedic theatre facility is proposed for construction. The main facilities of the new building will be on the ground floor and first floor, with plant rooms forming intermittent pods on the roof to create a partial third storey. Ecological survey was conducted in March 2022 by an experienced Senior Ecologist.
- 2.2 Situated at the northern corner of the hospital complex, the development zone covers a small area of land. It is located at National Grid Reference of SS 75434 90547, at an altitude of approximately 10m Above Ordnance Datum. On all sides of the development zone is existing hospital infrastructure, and the new building will attach and link along its south-west side to the main hospital building. As a consequence re-alignment of pedestrian paths and cycle access routes will be necessary, affecting a very small part of the hospital estate in the immediate vicinity of the northern corner of the main building.
- 2.3 This report details the findings of a survey conducted in March 2022. It considers the overall ecological value of the site and the degree to which the proposed development could potentially impact biodiversity. Additionally, it makes recommendations for enhancements for biodiversity in line with British legislation and Welsh Planning Policy 11 (PPW11).

3 Surveyor Experience

- 3.1 The survey was undertaken by Diane Morgan. Table 1 below details her relevant experience.

Table 1: Surveyor Experience

Name/Position	Licences	Experience
Diane Morgan BA (Hons) ACIEEM Senior Ecologist	S090641/1: bat, expiry January 2024 S090043/1; otter, expiry August 2023: S090042/1; dormouse, expiry August 2023: S090044/1; water vole, expiry August 2023	Diane has considerable experience (nearly 30 years) of surveying-built structures for bats and has carried out ringing of Daubenton's bat as part of a multi-year project on the species. She has undertaken monitoring work on several important lesser horseshoe bat roosts and assisted in radio tracking projects on the same species. She holds a City & Guilds Level 2 award for working in Medium Risk Confined Spaces. Prior to her work as a consultant ecologist, Diane was the Director of Brecknock Wildlife Trust and was involved in a wide range of nature conservation work including species and habitat protection and conservation land management. Other areas of interest include otter, dormice,

		water voles, reptiles, amphibians, fungi and crayfish. Diane is a Senior Ecologist with Just Mammals Limited
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4 Survey Methodology

- 4.1 Prior to the site visit, a desktop study was undertaken, which involved a standard search area of a 2km radius from the site (using a central grid reference), using the web-based MAGIC database (www.MAGIC.gov.uk). Details of statutory sites, designated for nature conservation were obtained. These included sites with statutory designations of international importance; Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protected Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites, as well as sites of national importance; Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs).
- 4.2 The South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) was consulted for records of Protected and Priority species and Phase 1 habitats within 1km of the site (package B). The SEWBRc search also provided details of any Local Nature Reserves (LNR) and Sites Important for Nature Conservation (SINC) within 1km.
- 4.3 A PEA was conducted on the 22nd March 2022. Details of the survey activity and weather conditions are provided in Table 2. The assessment comprised a survey employing the Phase 1 habitat survey methodology. This is a standardised technique for classifying and mapping British habitats. The site and its boundaries were appraised according to the standard methodology detailed in the 'Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey' (JNCC 2010). All areas within the survey zones were inspected and assessed for indicators of ecological value, including the presence and/or field signs of any protected or rare habitats and species. The site was walked over, recording plant species and features onto a custom-made recording sheet. Habitats and notes were drawn onto a map of the survey site and photographs were taken. A coloured Phase 1 habitat map was produced (see Appendix II).
- 4.4 Assessment for the presence or potential presence of protected species, such as bats, otters (*Lutra lutra*), hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*), badger (*Meles meles*), reptiles and amphibians, was undertaken by considering the features of the site. For consideration of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) potential presence, ponds within 500m of the site were identified using Ordnance Survey maps and aerial imagery. Other priority species listed under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act were also considered.
- 4.5 A daytime visual assessment was carried out to consider the external features of the main hospital building that the proposed new structure will attach and link to. This external survey was conducted from ground level. The context of the development zone within the immediate surrounding landscape was also assessed.
- 4.6 The potential suitability of the site for nesting birds was also considered, with the ecologist seeking signs of historic bird activity, nest remains, evidence of collections of bird dropping, feathers or any other signs of use by birds.
- 4.7 Invasive non-native species (INNS) such as Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), and Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), were recorded where present.

5 Site Description

- 5.1 The small area proposed for the construction of the new facilities is located at the northern corner of the main hospital building. The new structure is planned to occupy a narrow strip of ground between the main building and a detached structure known as the Energy Centre: it is designed to attach and link to the north-east elevation of the main building at ground floor and first floor levels. Ground level features in this part of the hospital site comprise a concrete pad from a previous hospital facility, pedestrian access paths, a cycle route, small strips of amenity grassland and a small number of vehicle parking bays.
- 5.2 A modern two storey structure, the main hospital building is built in brick with inset wall panels and cladding; metal door and window frames. Along the external north-east wall, where the new building will attach there are fittings including vents, cables and pipe ducts.
- 5.3 At ground level, the zone of the footprint for the new building contains a flat concrete plinth related to former infrastructure that is now removed (although these installations still appear in aerial images of the site as shown in Appendix 1). Also there are hard surfaces of pedestrian paths, a

cycle path and a parking bay. A single shipping container is present on the grassland near the north-west end of the Energy Centre. A drilling derrick is currently set-up on the grassland between the Energy Centre and the main building.

- 5.4 The Energy Centre is a rectangular shaped single storey modern structure standing on a north-west/south-east alignment. It is built in a style of brick and wall cladding that matches the main hospital building: it has a pitched roof covered with metal sheeting material. To the south-west, north-west and north-east of the Energy Centre there are small areas of short cut amenity grassland each fringed with a narrow band of stone chippings.
- 5.5 Hospital facilities include a large car park to the north-west side the hospital building with landscape features including three ponds to the south and south-west sides. The hospital complex is located in a corridor of built environment between the M4 motorway and the coast. This zone contains dense housing, modern retail and commercial business activity on the Baglan Industrial Park to the north-west and schools to the south and east of the hospital site.

6 Survey Constraints

- 6.1 All habitats on site could be identified with confidence. Full access was provided. Whilst the survey was conducted outside of the growing season, the features of the site were straightforward to assess. The time of year for the assessment was not deemed to constitute a constraint.

7 Desktop Study

- 7.1 No part of the site is within or directly adjacent to any statutory site of nature conservation interest, and the desktop study found no such sites within a 2km radius of the survey site.
- 7.2 Recorded in the SEWBRc search (unique reference 0212-907) were two SINC, but no significant habitats within the immediate vicinity (>500m);
- Panasonic site 725m to the north-west;
 - Neath Port Talbot watercourses to the south-east.
- 7.3 The data set holds 623 species records with 277 records for protected and priority species within 1km but there are no protected species recorded historically at or within close proximity to the survey zone. The records are briefly summarised in the bullet list below:
- terrestrial mammals – excluding bats – accounted for 36 records. The closest record to the site was that of west European hedgehog*, from approximately 209m distant and other recent records for this species are within the 1km zone. Badger and otter* are both recorded (road casualties from the M4 corridor), brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*) some 1.4km distant. There is one unreliable record for dormouse* some 2km from the site;
 - bats accounted for 18 records of common species in a number of residential properties;
 - reptiles account for 5 records with common lizard* (*Zootoca vivipara*) records from the Sandfields area to the north-west of the survey site. Two slow-worm* (*Anguis fragilis*) records are from the same area;
 - amphibian records for common frog (*Rana temporaria*) and common toad* (*Bufo bufo*) account for 4 records - also from the Sandfields area. There are no records for great crested newt* (*Triturus cristatus*) in the dataset;
 - bird data dominated the dataset with 145 records. Records are generally at a low resolution and many Section 7 species are included;
 - few plants are recorded but numerous records for invasive non-native plants are in the wider area including butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*), Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and cotoneaster species;
 - invertebrates accounted for 62 records with none under 450m in proximity. Most of these records are also at a low resolution.
- *denotes Section 7 priority species from the Environment (Wales) Act 2016

8 Survey Results

- 8.1 The survey site is a small plot of land no more than 0.1Ha. The features of the site are dominated by hard surfaces and narrow strips of amenity grassland bordered by fringe of coarse stone chippings. A Phase 1 survey, was completed on Tuesday 22nd March 2022 by an experienced ecologist. Details of the conditions under which the surveys were conducted are given in Table 2 below. Wind speeds shown employ the Beaufort scale.

Table 2: Summary of Survey Activity and Weather Conditions

Date	Survey Type	Timing	Weather Conditions
22/03/2022	Day time visual inspection, botanical survey and habitat assessment, including protected species assessment and preliminary roost assessment of adjacent buildings	13.45 –14.30 hours Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)	Air temperature: 17.5°C Cloud cover: 0/8 oktas Wind speed: F5, fresh breeze Conditions: Dry
Surveyor	Diane Morgan		

- 8.2 For recording purposes, the site was divided into different habitat types and mapped following the codes and conventions described in the Phase 1 Habitat Survey Handbook (JNCC 2010). Table 3 below describes the on-site habitats in order of surface area, with the most extensive habitats listed first. The most dominant plant species are also listed.

Table 3: Summary of Phase 1 Habitat Notes

Habitat	Phase 1 Classification	Description of Area and Typical Species
Type 1	J5 Other habitat; hardstanding	Pedestrian walkways covered with tarmacadam, a tarmacadam cycle path, a concrete plinth where a former structure was located, a car parking bay and narrow strips of coarse stone chippings form a variety of hard surfaces within the survey area
Type 2	J1.2 Amenity grassland	Recorded species include grass species (<i>Poa sp.</i>), dandelion (<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg), daisy (<i>Bellis perennis</i>), creeping buttercup (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>), rosebay willowherb (<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>), wavy bittercress (<i>Cardamine flexuosa</i>) and moss
Type 3	J3.6 Buildings	Buildings (Main Hospital and Energy Centre) and a single shipping container are present

- 8.3 The small areas of grassland supports a very limited diversity of plants. All other habitat types are hard surfaces or buildings. The grass is managed and kept to a short sward height. No trees or shrubs are present so opportunities for a habitat supporting other species is limited to invertebrates visiting the small number of flowering dandelions.
- 8.4 Buildings to either side of the footprint for the new structure were examined for features which can support protected species such as bats and birds. No features offering potential roosts for bats are present. No signs of current or historic breeding bird activity was detected. Bird activity at the survey site was limited to views of herring gull (*Larus argentatus*) flying overhead.
- 8.5 There are no habitats present to support protected species such as reptiles, amphibians, badger, dormouse or other species listed under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
- 8.6 Invasive non-native species (INNS) of plants were assessed, and none found to be present.

9 Discussion and Conclusions

- 9.1 The survey assessed the features of the development zone with consideration for the presence of protected habitats and species. The small scale of the proposed construction work and lack of natural habitats limit the potential of the development to impact on natural features and protected species. No evidence for the presence of protected species was found at the site and there are no recommendations for any follow-up targeted survey.
- 9.2 No potential roost features for bats were identified on the two buildings either side of the proposed development. No evidence for breeding bird activity was noted. Along the north-east side of the main building, where the new building will attach and link at ground floor and first floor level, there are no features suitable for providing bats the opportunity to occupy a resting place that risk damage, destruction or obstruction of a roost. The Energy Centre will remain the same with no modifications and it is not affected in the same way as the main building, no features suitable for bats were noted here. No bird activity indicative of holding a breeding territory or nest building was detected around the buildings in the development zone.
- 9.3 Three ponds are present on the hospital site to the south and south-west of the main building within a 500m radius. If amphibian and reptile species are present in these ponds, it is assessed to be unlikely that dispersal from this part of the site will occur as there is no habitat to support dispersal and no habitat for food or shelter in the survey zone for these species.
- 9.4 The construction of the proposed new building will result in the need to re-locate the pedestrian footpaths and cycle path in the immediate vicinity. A new layout for these access routes will result in an opportunity to provide a new amenity feature with outdoor seating for staff and visitors to the site, and this offers the chance to introduce a landscape planting of shrubs, trees and flowering plants that have benefits for biodiversity.

- 9.5 Situated on a busy hospital site with constant human activity, containing large areas of hard surfaces and with abundant external lighting, the site is not considered likely to be attractive to nocturnal wildlife such as foraging or commuting bats or terrestrial mammals such as hedgehogs. The hard surface of a large car park north of the survey zone is a hazardous environment for a hedgehog, but these animals may stray onto the site and forage through the grassland along the eastern side of the hospital complex. The wider zone contains the modern commercial and retail activity on Baglan Industrial Park, a busy network of roads including the M4 motorway, and dense residential areas. The surrounding zone appears a hostile environment for terrestrial wildlife.
- 9.6 Invasive plant species were considered during the assessment and none was found.
- 9.7 To comply with recent Welsh planning policy, it will be necessary for the new development to make a positive contribution to local biodiversity. A scheme is proposed below which takes account of the human activity at the site and the benefits of providing by an outdoor seating area.

10 Recommendations

- 10.1 No further targeted ecological surveys are recommended at this time. The removal of the small grassland areas can proceed at any time. As a precautionary measure during construction works, any trenches must not be left in such a state as to present a pitfall trap, where animals such as hedgehogs can fall in and not be able to climb out. An escape builders' plank must be secured so that any animal falling into pits and trenches can make use of the plank, set at an angle of 45°, in order to escape. Food waste from the workforce must not be left at the site, which can attract wildlife such as hedgehog or otter into the working zone.
- 10.2 All nesting birds, their nests, chicks and eggs are protected by Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). No features were identified where nesting birds are likely to be encountered but if an active nest is encountered it will be necessary to follow the guidance below in order to avoid an unlawful act occurring.
- 10.3 Once a nest is established, the birds must be able to have access at all times until the young have fledged and the nest is no longer active. If an active nest is found, it must be retained and protected. A cordon must be established for a safe working zone a suitable distance from the nest, and not until the chicks have fledged can the nest be destroyed. Where active nests are identified, precautions as described above must be followed so that the birds can breed successfully and eggs and chicks are not lost. Only when a nest is no longer active can it be removed.
- 10.4 As an enhancement for biodiversity, a new outdoor seating area will be provided with a small scale planting scheme, to favour wildlife. Table 4 below includes a list of suitable native trees and shrubs which can be planted as part of the landscaping proposals. It is best that such plants are sourced locally in order to reduce likelihood of importing diseases.

Table 4: Recommended Native Tree and Shrub Species

Common Name	Scientific Name
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>
Silver birch	<i>Betula pubescens</i>
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>
Cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>
Small-leaved lime	<i>Tilia cordata</i>
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>

- 10.5 Table 5 includes a list of recommended flowering plants and shrubs to benefit wildlife.

Table 5: Recommended Flowering Plants and Shrubs

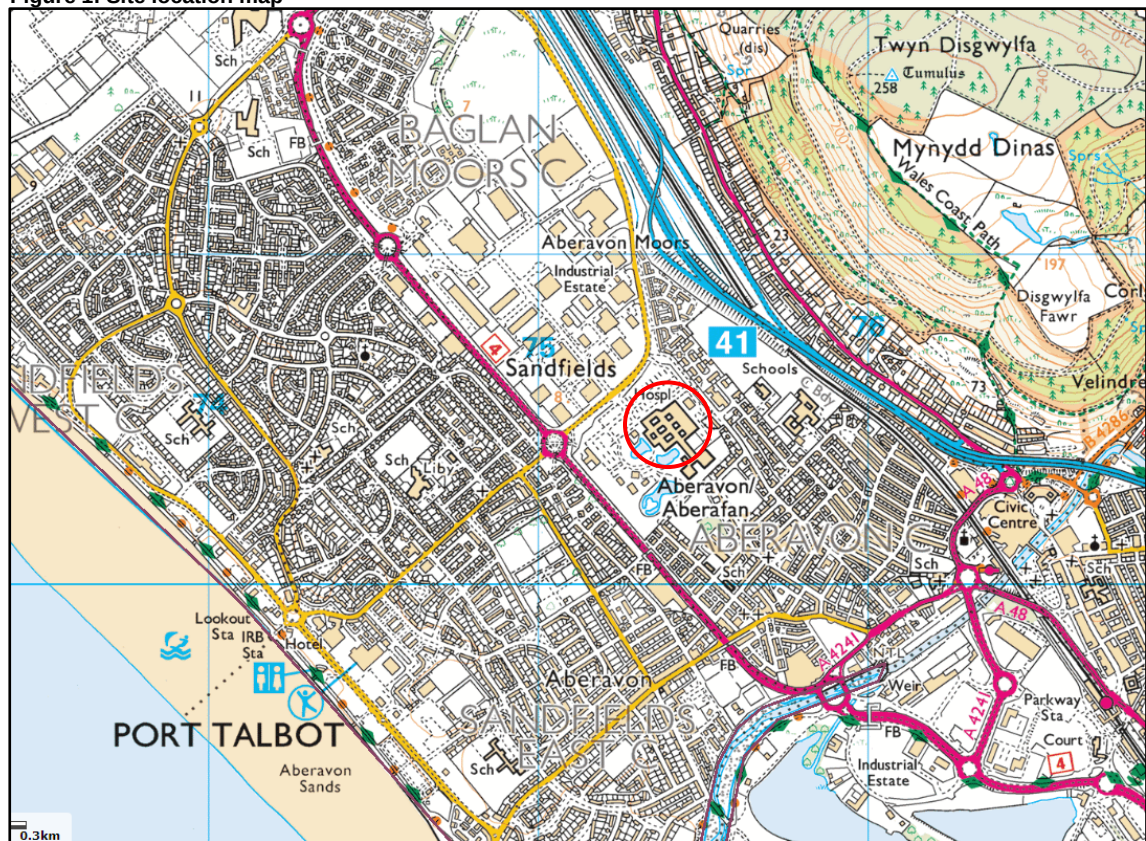
Common Name	Scientific Name
Barberry	<i>Berberis vulgaris</i>
Clematis	<i>Clematis montana</i> or <i>Clematis vitalba</i>
Common broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>
Guelder rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>
Hebe	<i>Hebe albicans</i>
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>
Lavender	<i>Lavandula spp.</i>
Oregon grape	<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>
Tree cotoneaster	<i>Cotoneaster 'Coral Beauty'</i>
Viburnum	<i>Viburnum davidii</i>

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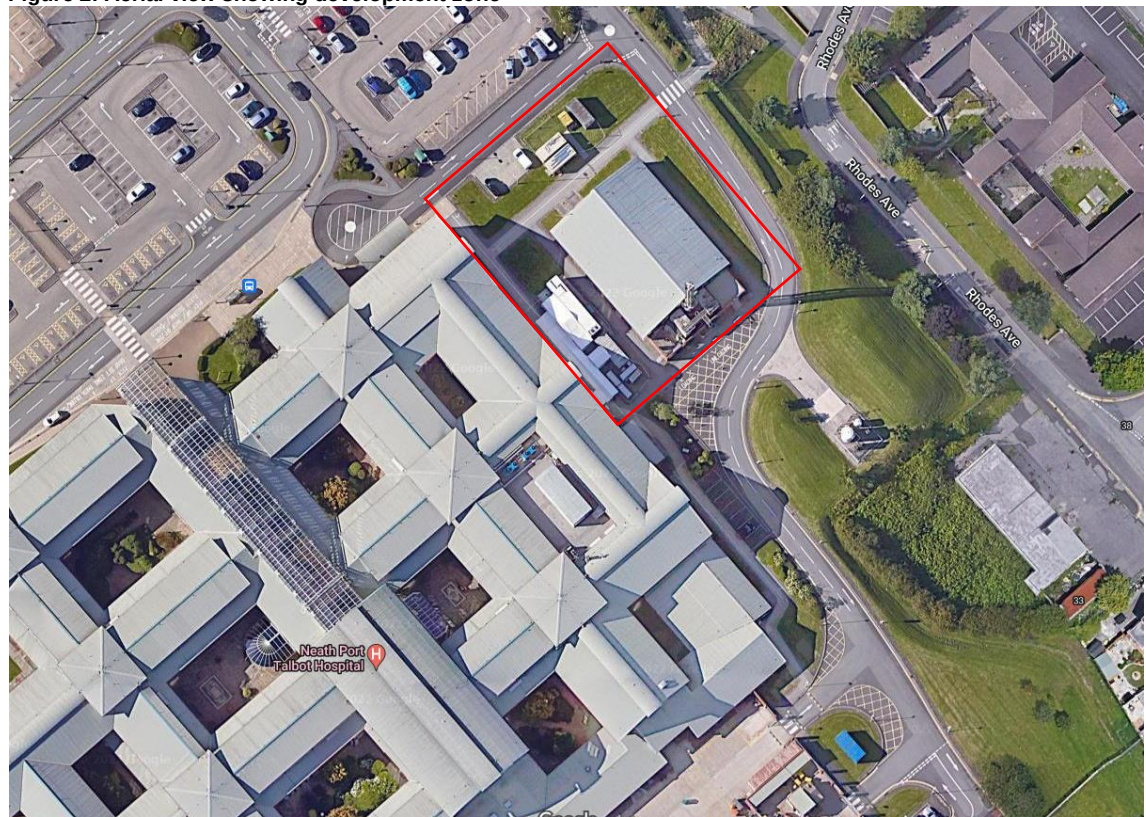
Appendix I: Site Plan

Figure 1: Site location map



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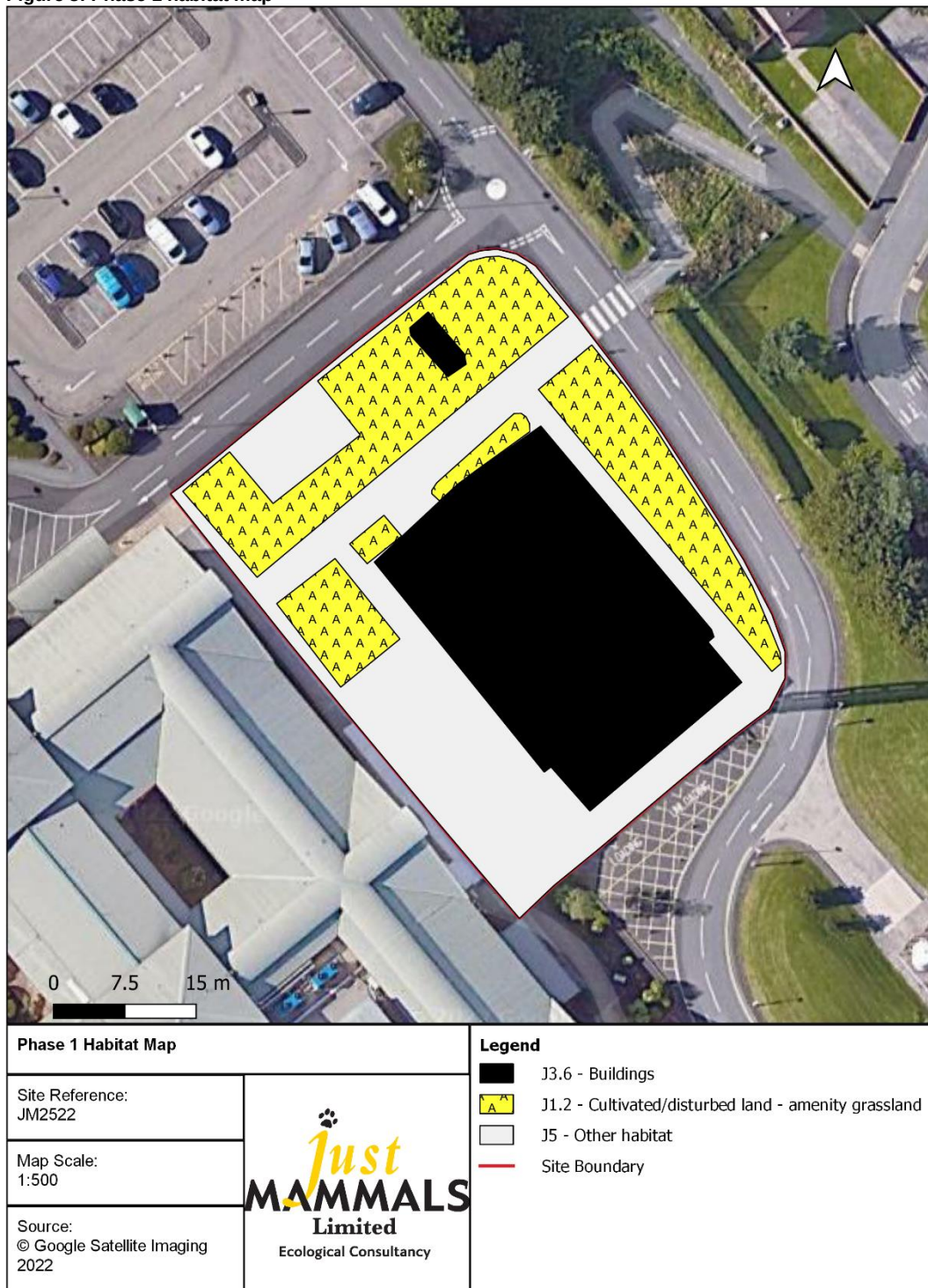
Figure 2: Aerial view showing development zone



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Appendix II: Phase 1 Habitat Map

Figure 3: Phase 1 habitat map



Appendix III: Site Photographs

Plate 1: Location for new building looking south-east



Plate 2: Location for new building looking north-west



Plate 3: North-east elevation of main building where new building is proposed to attach and link



Plate 4: Concrete plinth between main building and Energy Centre



Plate 5: North-east elevation of main building



Plate 6: North-east elevation of main building



Plate 7: Pedestrian path at north-west NW end of Energy Centre

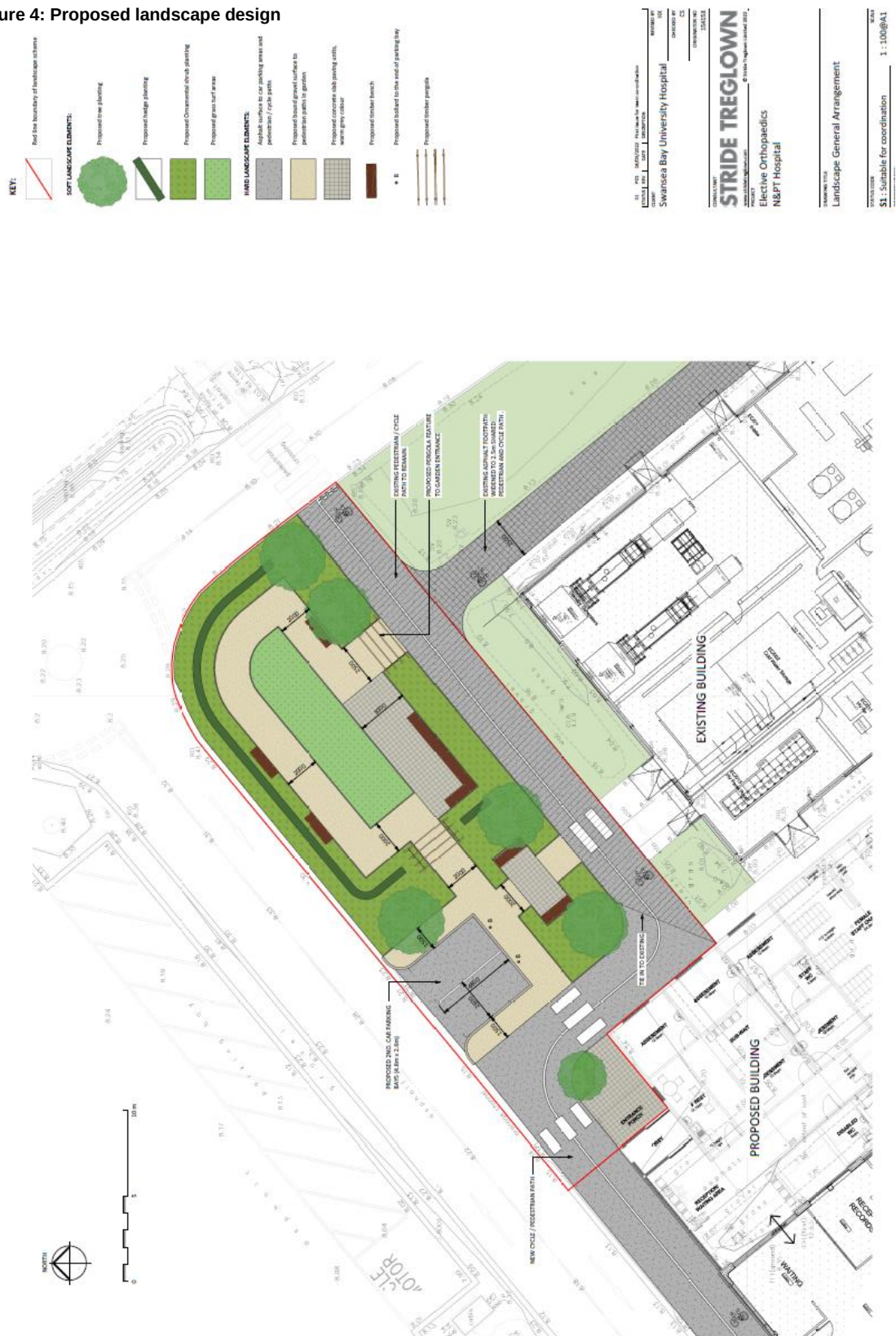


Plate 8: North-eastside of Energy Centre looking north-west



Appendix IV: Proposed Landscape Design

Figure 4: Proposed landscape design



Appendix V: Relevant Legislation

Bats

All species of bat in Britain, and their places of rest are protected under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA), Section 9(1), 9(4)(a) and 9(4)(b) as amended by Schedule 12 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Further protection is afforded by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) 2019. In relation to structures used by bats for shelter or protection (i.e. roosts), this legislation makes it an offence to either intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any site used by bats, whether bats are present at the time or not, or to intentionally or recklessly disturb bats within a roost.

Infringements under this legislation include building demolition, removal of hollow trees, blocking, filling or installing grills over old mines or tunnels, building alteration or maintenance work, re-pointing of stone walls, getting rid of unwanted bat colonies, re-roofing, remedial timber treatment, re-wiring or plumbing in roofs, treatment of wasps, bees or cluster flies (Mitchell-Jones, 1992; Childs, 2001). Lesser horseshoe bats are included in Annex II of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) 2019 and hence require special protection.

Maximum penalties for committing offences relating to bats or their roosts can amount to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to fines of up to Level 5 on the standard scale under the Criminal Justice Act 1982/1991 (i.e. £5000 in April 2001) per roost or bat disturbed or killed, or to both. Bodies corporate and their directors/secretaries are liable for offences under the above mentioned Regulations and the WCA. Additionally, where such an offence results in the offender benefitting in a monetary form from the illegal action, confiscation or civil recovery of the proceeds can occur under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

It is sensible to assess as soon as possible if bats are present at potential sites for development – preferable before the land is acquired. In some cases, the period required for adequate survey work may span more than one calendar year. If a development, including demolition or change of use, is likely to impact on bats and their roosts then a licence will usually be required. Adequate survey results are a necessary input to any licence application. If bats are not found until late in the development stage this may result in delays while a licence is sought and even in offences being committed.

The law with respect to dwellings and other structures is applied equally. Where disturbance is deemed likely to have a significant effect on bats to survive, breed and rear their young or will affect the local distribution and abundance of the species, a European Protected Species licence issued by Natural Resources Wales. A licence application must demonstrate that the development will not be detrimental to the maintenance and conservation status of the species concerned. This explanation must be regarded only as a guide to the law. For further details, reference must be made to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) 2019, and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Wild birds

All wild birds, their eggs and nests are protected by The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence, with certain exceptions, to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built;
- intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird;
- sell wild birds or put them on display for sale;
- use traps or similar items to kill, injure or take wild birds; and
- intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

Penalties that can be imposed for criminal offences in respect of a single bird, nest or egg contrary to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is an unlimited fine, up to six months imprisonment or both. In exceptional cases Natural Resources Wales issues licences for specific purposes, so that legitimate work may be undertaken without breaking the law.

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Clients include government departments, local and regional authorities, development agencies, commercial and industrial enterprises as well as statutory nature conservation organisations, wildlife trusts and other charitable bodies.

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