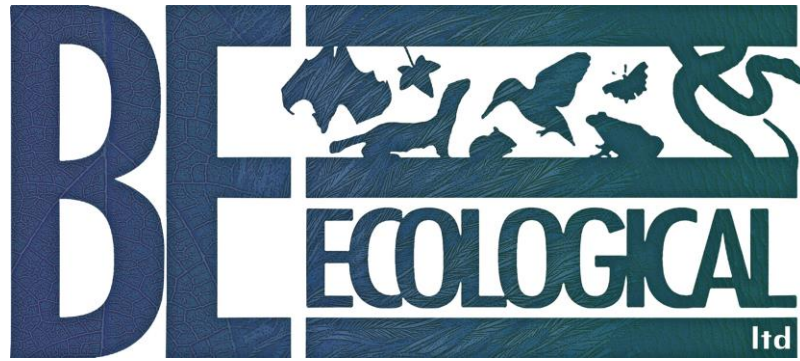




PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

LAND ADJOINING DAN Y GRAIG, PONT WALBY, NEATH

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

ISSUE 1,VA

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Proposed Development: land adjoining Dan y Graig

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

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CONTENTS

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY	1
1 INTRODUCTION.....	2
1.1 BACKGROUND	2
1.2 SITE DESCRIPTION	2
2 HABITATs SURVEY	4
2.1 BACKGROUND	4
2.2 METHODOLOGY	4
2.3 CONSTRAINTS	4
3 RESULTS.....	5
3.1 FIELD SURVEY	5
4 HABITATS - EVALUATION, IMPACT CHARACTERISATION & ASSESSMENT..	7
4.1 SCRUB	7
4.2 SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND	8
4.3 OPEN WATER (RUNNING) – RIVER	9
4.4 WOODLAND	11
5 SPECIES - EVALUATION, IMPACT CHARACTERISATION & ASSESSMENT..	12
5.1 BATS	12
5.2 BREEDING BIRDS	13
5.3 AMPHIBIANS	15
5.4 REPTILES	17
5.5 INVERTEBRATES	19
5.6 OTTER AND BADGER	20
6 CONCLUSION	21
7 REFERENCES	22
APPENDIX A – PHOTOS	23
APPENDIX B – METHOD STATEMENT- REPTILES	26
APPENDIX C – Species list.....	28

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

BE Ecological Ltd. was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) to identify ecological constraints and potential solutions and to inform the design of a proposed development and outline planning application to develop land adjoining Dan Y Graig, Pont Walby, Neath.

Therefore, a Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken, extended by the inclusion of a biological records data search and an assessment of the potential for protected species to be present on and adjacent to the site.

A number of habitats were recorded across the application boundary, including:

- Scrub
- Semi-improved grassland (hay meadow);
- Woodland; and
- River

There is a potential for the following protected species to be present on or adjacent to the site:

- Reptiles;
- Bats
- Amphibians; and
- Breeding birds

It is considered that the site has a generally low to moderate ecological value at a local level and that further ecological surveys are unnecessary.

It is recommended that:

- The site / development areas within the application boundary be cleared in accordance with a method statement to prevent causing harm to reptiles and amphibians; and

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

It is proposed to develop land adjacent to Dan Y Graig, Pont Walby for housing. This PEA has been prepared to:

- collate and analyse existing ecological information relating to the site;
- identify the habitats present on site;
- identify the potential for protected species to be present on site;
- using the information gathered to determine whether there will be any impacts (both positive and negative) on the species and habitats present;
- provide recommendations for further survey as necessary; and
- suggest outline mitigation and enhancement ideas and principles

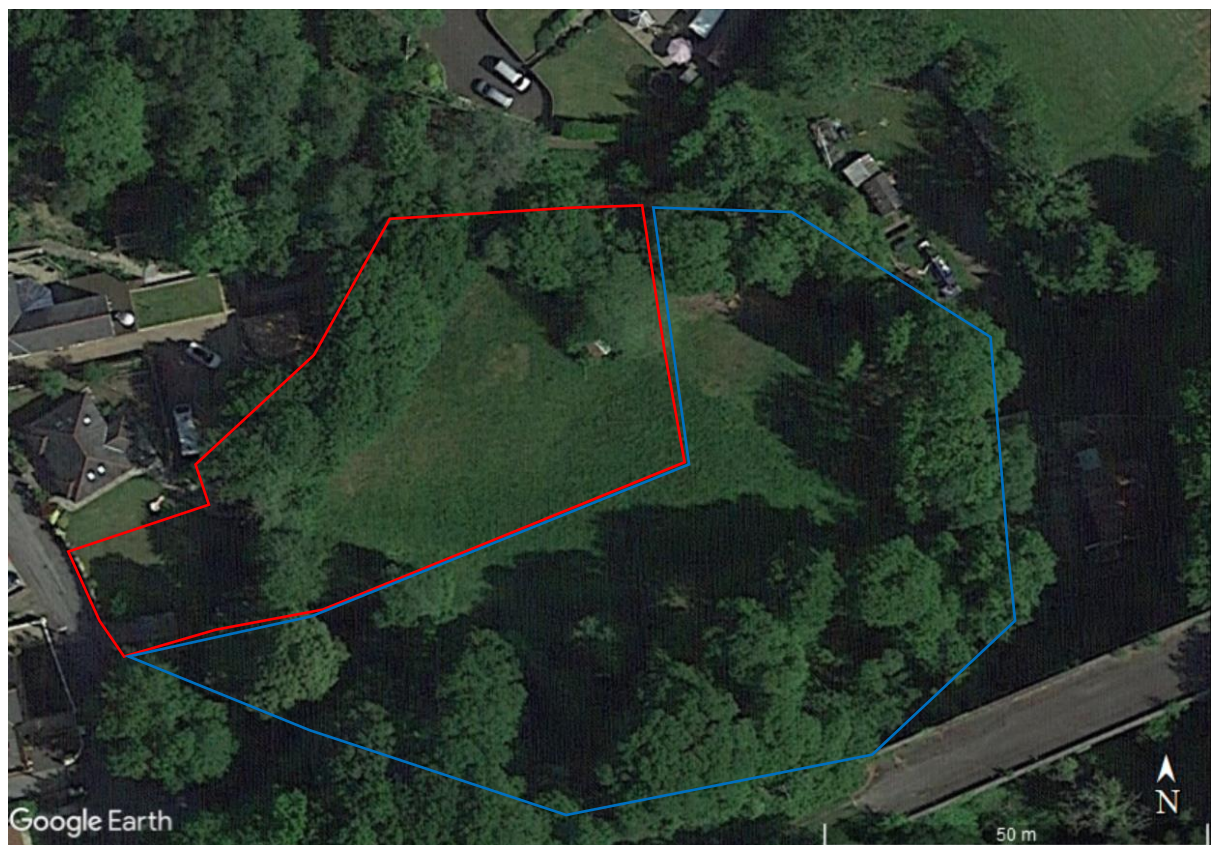
1.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is an area of semi-improved grassland, formerly used as a hay meadow adjacent to Dan Y Graig, Pont Walby, Neath.

The habitats within the ownership boundary comprises of woodland that would have been a former hedgerow with trees but overtime has developed into woodland. There is a river on the application sites northern boundary with a disused railway to the south of the ownership boundary with further woodland beyond.

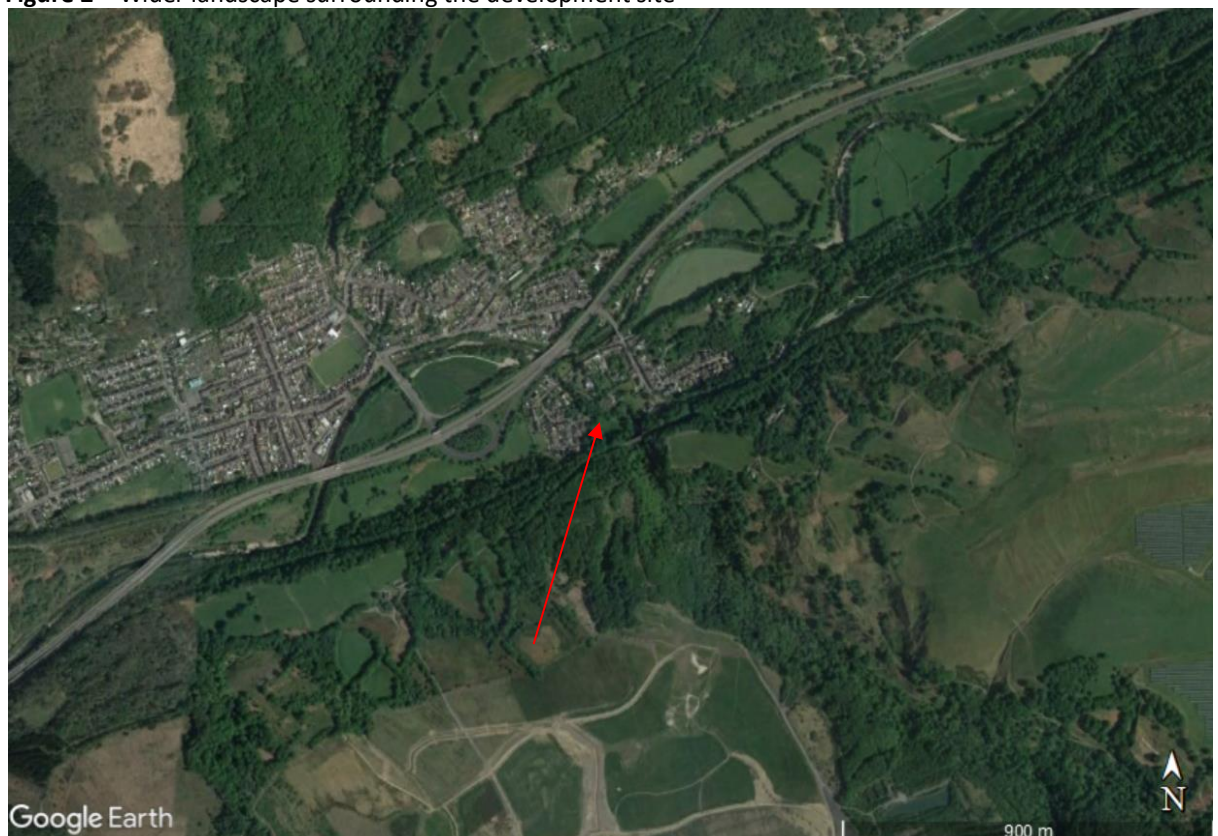
The site is set on the edge of an urban habitat with good connectivity to the landscape via woodland and rivers. The site is accessed from Glan Gwrelych to the west via an existing field access.

Figure 1 - aerial overview of the application site (outlined red) (blue line= additional land ownership)



(Image courtesy of Google Earth)

Figure 2 – Wider landscape surrounding the development site



2 HABITATS SURVEY

2.1 BACKGROUND

A Phase 1 habitat survey was carried out to assess the existing habitats, identify any protected habitats 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 biological records data search and a field survey.

The survey was undertaken on the 27th July 2021.

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.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

2.2.1 Field survey:

Experienced surveyors from BE Ecological Ltd carried out a habitat assessment and mapping exercise in July 2021 using the Phase 1 habitat survey technique. Nomenclature follows Stace (1997)¹.

2.3 CONSTRAINTS

The field survey was undertaken at a time of year when the full botanical diversity may not have been apparent; however, this is thought not to pose a constraint due to the number of species that were seen.

There were no other constraints to the surveys and assessments undertaken.

¹ Stace, C (1997). *New Flora of the British Isles* (2nd Ed.). Cambridge University Press

3 RESULTS

There is speculation that the site itself is either a SINC or is adjacent to a SINC. This will need to be discussed with the planning department following the application submission. This report will also need to be updated prior to planning determination with full mitigation proposals.

3.1 FIELD SURVEY

3.1.1 Habitat description

Please refer to **section 1.2** above.

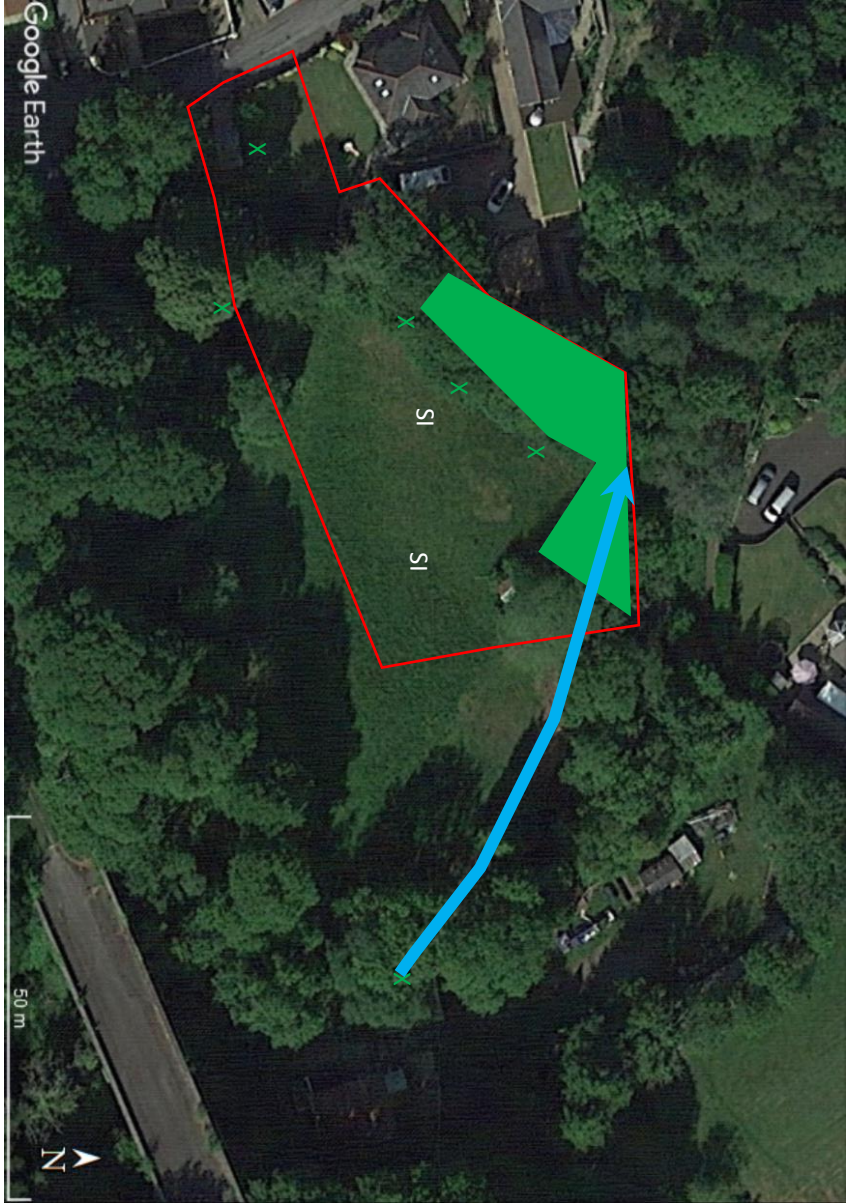
3.1.2 Habitats

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

- Scattered scrub;
- Semi-improved grassland;
- Open water (running);
- Woodland;
-

Please refer to **Figure 3**.

Figure 3 – Habitat survey results



KEY:	
	Woodland
	Scattered scrub
	River
	Semi-improved grassland
	Red line boundary

4 HABITATS - EVALUATION, IMPACT CHARACTERISATION & ASSESSMENT

4.1 SCRUB

4.1.1 Scrub - evaluation

Scrub was recorded across the site. Generally, it is dominated by bramble and is scattered and limited in connectivity and extent.

This habitat, because it is so quick growing, widespread and common, is of interest primarily for its ability to provide fauna with sheltering and foraging opportunities, particularly breeding birds. This habitat is prevalent around the boundaries of the site and is common in the wider area and so is therefore considered to be of a **low (site)** ecological importance.

4.1.2 Scrub - impact characterisation

It is considered that the majority of this habitat within the red line boundary will be retained within a buffer zone to protect the river.

4.1.3 Scrub - impact assessment without mitigation

It is considered that without mitigation there would be a **certain minor permanent adverse impact** on this habitat as a result of the development.

4.1.4 Scrub – potential mitigation measures

Specific mitigation will not be required as the habitat is widespread, common and well represented in the area. However, it is recommended that scrub is removed outwith the breeding bird season i.e. between August and March inclusive. If this is not possible, it can be removed during the breeding season, but only after an ecologist has inspected it for birds and nests and declared it safe to do so.

4.1.5 Scrub - impact assessment with mitigation

It is considered that with mitigation there will be a **certain minor short term adverse impact** on this habitat as a result of the development.

4.1.6 Scrub - significance of the impact

Without mitigation:

It is considered that the impacts of the development would be of a **slight** significance.

With mitigation:

It is considered that the impacts of the development would be of a **neutral** significance.

4.2 SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND

4.2.1 Semi-improved grassland - evaluation

This habitat is relatively common within the UK, Wales and the area surrounding the development site. However, the overall area has been reduced by the effects of agriculture and development. This habitat is therefore of a **high** ecological value.

The grassland on this site is small in area and has been subject to constant agricultural pressure over the years and has therefore been heavily modified. At the time of the survey visit, the sward was very short, less than 30mm and heavily poached along the access track. The grass is cut regularly with the sward kept relatively short.

Therefore, in the context of the development it is considered to be of a **moderate** ecological importance at a **local (site)** level.

4.2.2 Semi-improved - impact characterisation

It is considered that without mitigation the entire area of this habitat (within the red line boundary) would be lost to the development.

4.2.3 Semi-improved - impact assessment without mitigation

It is considered that without mitigation there would be a **certain significant permanent adverse impact** on this habitat as a result of the development.

4.2.4 Semi-improved – potential mitigation measures

Specific mitigation will be required; measures will include (but not be limited to) the following:

- Minimisation of grassland loss through design;
- Management of retained habitats that will be fenced off from the development.

4.2.5 Semi-improved - impact assessment with mitigation

It is considered that with mitigation there will be a **certain minor short term adverse impact** on this habitat as a result of the development.

4.2.6 Semi-improved grassland - significance of the impact

Without mitigation:

It is considered that the impacts of the development would be of a **slight** significance.

With mitigation:

It is considered that the impacts of the development would be of a **neutral** significance.

4.3 OPEN WATER (RUNNING) – River

4.3.1 River - evaluation

This habitat is a UK priority habitat found widely across south Wales with a number of sub-categories. It is included within the Neath Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Threats to it include pollution, eutrophication, bankside vegetation structural changes, anthropogenic physical changes to channels (e.g. culverting, bank reinforcement etc.). It is therefore considered that this habitat is of a generally **high national** ecological importance.

The river on the northern boundary is overshadowed by trees and scrub.

It is considered that, the stream is of a **high local (site)** ecological importance.

4.3.2 River - impact characterisation

It is considered that there will be no direct impacts on this habitat as a result of the development as there will be no construction within 7m and the boundary vegetation will be retained.

There is a possibility that there could be indirect impacts as a result of pollution incidents during the construction phase of the development.

The surface water and foul sewerage schemes to be put in place as part of the development will prevent the chances of both direct or indirect impacts on the stream during the operational phase of the development.

4.3.3 River- impact assessment without mitigation

It is considered that without mitigation there may be an **unlikely minor short term adverse impact** on this habitat as a result of the development.

4.3.4 River– potential mitigation measures

Specific mitigation will not be required; however, measures will be required to ensure that the water quality of the stream and its tributaries is maintained. These will include (but not be limited to) the following:

- Implementation of a buffer of at least 7m between the top of the river bank and any construction areas;
- Essential working (only) within the buffer zone will be controlled by permit;
- Working in accordance with all legislation, guidelines and best practice relating to working in proximity to watercourses;
 - Provision of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) to ensure that all construction methodologies include the necessary precautions are taken to prevent pollution incidents, preventative measures (e.g. sediment fencing) enacted and that clean up equipment (e.g. hay bales, spill kits etc.) are provided; and
- Implementation of watercourse monitoring to identify pollution incidents as soon as possible in the unlikely event that they do occur.

4.3.5 River- impact assessment with mitigation

It is considered that with mitigation there will be a **probable neutral impact** on this habitat as a result of the development.

4.3.6 River- significance of the impact

Without mitigation:

It is considered that the impacts of the development would be of a **slight** significance.

With mitigation:

It is considered that the positive impacts of the development would be of a **significant** significance.

4.4 WOODLAND

4.4.1 Woodland - evaluation

Woodland is an intrinsic part of the countryside and provide shelter and foraging habitat for a range of flora and fauna as well as providing connectivity between other habitats. Because of the range of ecological receptors they benefit, they are regarded as priority habitats and should be considered as being of a **high** ecological value.

The woodland present within the red line boundary would have originally been a hedgerow with trees surrounding the field. Over time this has grown into woodland and linked with the wider wooded landscape.

Within the context of the proposed development and the application site, it is therefore considered that the hedges within the survey area are of a **low -moderate** ecological value at a **local (site)** level.

4.4.2 Woodland - impact characterisation

All the woodland/trees on the site will be retained and fenced off from the development.

4.4.3 Woodland - impact without mitigation

It is considered that without mitigation there would be a **certain minor permanent adverse** impact at a **local (site)** level.

4.4.4 Woodland - potential mitigation measures

- Not required as all of the woodland will be retained and protected.

4.4.5 Woodland - impact with mitigation

It is considered that with mitigation there would be an **certain minor short term adverse** impact at a **local (site)** level.

4.4.6 Woodland - significance of the impact

Without mitigation

It is considered that the significance of the impact is **moderate**.

With mitigation

It is considered that with appropriate mitigation, the significance of the impact is **neutral**.

5 SPECIES - EVALUATION, IMPACT CHARACTERISATION & ASSESSMENT

5.1 BATS

5.1.1 Bats – evaluation

Bats are protected by international and domestic legislation, a reflection of their increasingly threatened status; bats are therefore of **high** international value.

There are no trees on the site which offer bats any potential roosting features. Any potential features within retained trees will be protected from any indirect impacts.

Overall, within the context of the surrounding land use, it is considered that the development site is of negligible value to and for roosting bats. The site provides foraging habitat for bats.

5.1.2 Bats – Impact characterisation

It is considered that there will be no adverse impacts on roosting bats.

Bats will be able to continue using the boundaries of the site for foraging purposes and the gardens of the new houses during the operational phase of the development.

5.1.3 Bats - impact assessment without mitigation

It is considered that there will be a **certain minor medium term adverse impact** on bat foraging activity at a **local (site)** level.

5.1.4 Bats - potential mitigation measures

Although it is unlikely that bat roosts will be affected by the proposed development and bat foraging habitat is not protected *per se* it is proposed to undertake the following actions:

- All lighting requirements will be minimised and be of a type which causes least impact on bats;
- All vegetation and tree clearance will be minimised to retain as much of the existing boundary habitat as possible;
- All lighting will be directed away from retained vegetation and boundary features;
- A licensed bat ecologist will be “on call” for the duration of the project in the unlikely event that bats are discovered, in which case the work will cease immediately, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) will be contacted. A development licence may be required prior to any further work being carried out. No further work will be undertaken without the approval of NRW.

5.1.5 Bats - impact without mitigation

It is considered that without mitigation there would be an **unlikely minor short term adverse impact** at a **local (site)** level.

5.1.6 Bats - significance of the impact

Without mitigation

It is considered that the significance of the impact is **slight**.

With mitigation

It is considered that with appropriate mitigation, the significance of the impact is **neutral**.

5.2 BREEDING BIRDS

5.2.1 Summary

Breeding birds are likely to utilise the taller vegetation of the site's boundaries and scrub areas adjacent to them.

5.2.2 Breeding birds - evaluation

Due to the legislative protection afforded to them, breeding birds are considered be of **medium – high national** importance.

There is suitable habitat for birds to utilise for breeding, in the site boundaries and areas of scrub vegetation; these areas also provide foraging opportunities for birds.

Within the context of the site and the proposed development, it is considered that breeding birds are of **low local** importance.

5.2.3 Birds - impact characterisation

The removal of any scrub vegetation would reduce the number of opportunities available to breeding birds in terms of nesting area, cover / shelter and foraging.

If vegetation removal was to be undertaken during the breeding season, there is the potential for birds to be disturbed killed or injured and / or their nests to be disturbed, damaged or destroyed.

5.2.4 Birds - impact without mitigation

It is considered that without mitigation, there would be an **probable minor short term adverse** impact at a **local (site)** level.

5.2.5 Birds - potential mitigation measures

Mitigation will be required and should include (but not be limited to) the following measures:

- All vegetation and brash removal should be undertaken outwith the breeding season i.e. between mid-August / September and April inclusive;
- Any clearance close to the start and end of this period should only be undertaken following an assessment by a suitably experienced ecologist as the breeding season is not fixed and is subject to annual variation;

- Where clearance is required during the breeding season, all areas should be subject to an assessment no more than 48 hours in advance to check for the presence of breeding birds;
- Should evidence of breeding birds, in particularly nests, be recorded, no clearance may be undertaken within 15m of any nest site until such time as the nest is vacated naturally; and
- Any post-development landscaping plan should include the provision of scrub &/or shrub habitats that can be utilised by breeding birds.

Consideration should be given to including measures to benefit birds within the housing development e.g. installation of bird boxes on new buildings.

It is considered likely that the gardens of the new properties will eventually provide suitable habitat both for breeding and foraging opportunities; however, it is not possible to include this as mitigation or accurately assess the potential value at this stage.

5.2.6 Birds - impact with mitigation

It is considered that with mitigation, there would be a **very unlikely minor short term adverse** impact at a **local** level.

5.2.7 Birds - significance of the impact

Without mitigation

It is considered that the significance of the impact is **neutral**.

With mitigation

It is considered that with appropriate mitigation, the significance of the impact is **neutral**.

5.3 AMPHIBIANS

5.3.1 Summary

There are no waterbodies on the site which would provide great crested newts or other amphibians with breeding habitat.

There is suitable terrestrial habitat around the boundaries of the site which amphibians could potentially use.

Given the lack of waterbodies on the development site and the grazing pressure on the grassland, it is considered unlikely that great crested newts will be present on the site.

5.3.2 Amphibians - evaluation

Amphibians are protected by UK legislation and therefore they are of **medium to high national** ecological importance. Great crested newts are protected by international legislation incorporated into UK legislation by the Habitat Regulations (as amended).

Overall the site appears to be of a generally **low** value to this group as the dominant habitat type (semi-improved grassland) appears to be less suitable due to constant heavy grazing pressure. The wet ditch is likely to be the only area of the site which will be of use to this group. It is not known whether or not the ditch is wet all year; however it appears to be very shallow and well vegetated, so its suitability as a breeding place is significantly reduced.

5.3.3 Amphibians - impact characterisation

It is possible that animals may be killed or injured during works in proximity to the wet ditch and site boundaries as part of the site clearance phase of the development.

There is no suitable hibernation habitat present on the site.

5.3.4 Amphibians - impact characterisation without mitigation

It is considered that in the absence of mitigation there would be a **probable minor short term adverse** impact at a **local (site)** level.

5.3.5 Amphibians - mitigation measures

As long as amphibian presence is assumed and site clearance is undertaken in accordance with an appropriate method statement, it is considered that a full trapping and translocation exercise is not required, and that habitat manipulation and denial is an appropriate method of ensuring that reptiles are not harmed during the site clearance.

Therefore, the following measures will be adopted:

- Clearance will be conducted in accordance with a Method Statement to ensure that should amphibians be found in the course of site clearance or any other development activity, they will not be harmed and can be adequately cared for
- Clearance will only be undertaken during the active season (March-October, inclusive);

- Clearance outwith this period is possible, but depends on weather and temperatures being suitable to ensure that animals are likely to be active;
- There will be no clearance of hibernation features outwith the active season; and
- Animals will be excluded from entering or re-entering the site during clearance/operational phase of works by ensuring that the site is kept as bare ground i.e. clear of any vegetation or other shelter.

5.3.6 Amphibians - impact characterisation with mitigation

It is considered that there will be an **unlikely minor short term adverse impact** at a **local (site)** level as a result of the proposed development.

5.3.7 Amphibians - significance of the impact

Without mitigation

It is considered that the significance of the impact is **slight**.

With mitigation

It is considered that the significance of the impact is **neutral**..

5.4 REPTILES

5.4.1 Summary

No reptile survey was undertaken at this time due to the time of year the visit was carried out; however a brief habitat assessment indicated that only limited areas of the site provide favourable habitat for reptiles, specifically the vegetated boundaries and their interface with the grassland areas.

The habitat assessment looked for features which would be attractive to reptiles such as:

- south facing banks;
- varied profile ground form;
- basking areas;
- vegetation cover;
- structurally diverse vegetation;
- potential hibernation sites; and
- evidence of suitable prey sources.

5.4.2 Reptiles - evaluation

Reptiles are protected by UK legislation and therefore they are of **medium to high national** ecological importance.

Overall the site appears to be of a generally **low** value to reptiles as the dominant habitat type (semi-improved grassland) appeared to be generally unsuitable due to constant heavy mowing pressure; it is considered that the interface of the grassland and vegetated boundaries are the only areas of the site which will be of use to this group.

5.4.3 Reptiles - impact characterisation

It is possible that reptiles may be killed or injured during works in proximity to the wet ditch and site boundaries as part of the site clearance phase of the development.

There is no suitable hibernation habitat present on the site.

5.4.4 Reptiles - impact characterisation without mitigation

It is considered that in the absence of mitigation there would be a **probable minor short term adverse** impact at a **local (site)** level.

5.4.5 Reptiles - mitigation measures

As long as reptile presence is assumed and site clearance is undertaken in accordance with an appropriate method statement, it is considered that a full trapping and translocation exercise is not required, and that habitat manipulation and denial is an appropriate method of ensuring that reptiles are not harmed during the site clearance.

Therefore, the following measures will be adopted:

- Clearance will be conducted in accordance with a Method Statement to ensure that should reptiles be found in the course of site clearance or any other development activity, they will not be harmed and can be adequately cared for

- Clearance will only be undertaken during the reptile active season (April-October, inclusive);
- Clearance outwith this period is possible, but depends on weather and temperatures being suitable to ensure that reptiles are likely to be active;
- There will be no clearance of hibernation habitat outwith the active season;
- Reptiles will be excluded from entering or re-entering the site during clearance/operational phase of works by ensuring that the site is kept as bare ground i.e. clear of any vegetation or other shelter; and
- Consideration should be given to the inclusion of a reptile hibernaculum 4m x 2m (design at **Appendix F**) on the site to provide shelter for reptiles. The location of the hibernaculum will be confirmed in consultation with an ecologist on completion of the final site layout / design.

5.4.6 Reptiles - impact characterisation with mitigation

It is considered that there will be an **unlikely minor short term adverse impact** at a **local (site)** level as a result of the proposed development.

5.4.7 Reptiles - significance of the impact

Without mitigation

It is considered that the significance of the impact is **slight**.

With mitigation

It is considered that the significance of the impact is **neutral**.

5.5 INVERTEBRATES

5.5.1 Summary

No invertebrate survey was undertaken at this time due to the time of year the visit was carried out; however a brief habitat assessment indicated that the site can provide favourable habitat for this varied group, with the taller vegetation closer to the site boundaries being the more diverse areas and most likely to provide suitable habitat.

5.5.2 Invertebrates - evaluation

No invertebrates are protected by legislation with the exception of the large blue butterfly (*Phengaris arion*); this species is not found in this region and will therefore not be considered further. Other species of invertebrate are listed on Schedule 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and are therefore of a **high national (Welsh)** ecological importance. Of these, the marsh fritillary butterfly (*Euphydryas aurinia*) is present in good numbers in the area surrounding the development site with the Blaen Cynon SAC being designated for its presence.

The food plant for the marsh fritillary butterfly (Devil's-bit scabious – *Succisa pratensis*) is not present on the site.

Overall the site appears to be of a generally **low** value to invertebrates as the dominant habitat type (semi-improved grassland) appears to be kept as a short sward as a result of constant grazing; it is considered that the interface of the grassland and vegetated boundaries are the areas of the site which are most likely to be of use to this group, with those present most likely being common and widespread.

5.5.3 Invertebrates - impact characterisation

It is probable that the site clearance will result in the loss of habitats suitable for this group and that slow moving species may be killed or injured during the clearance.

5.5.4 Invertebrates - impact characterisation without mitigation

It is considered that in the absence of mitigation there would be a **probable moderate short term adverse** impact at a **local (site)** level.

5.5.5 Invertebrates - mitigation measures

As long as reptile presence is assumed and site clearance is undertaken in accordance with an appropriate method statement, it is considered that a full trapping and translocation exercise is not required, and that habitat manipulation and denial is an appropriate method of ensuring that reptiles are not harmed during the site clearance.

Therefore, the following measures will be adopted:

- Minimisation of vegetation removal through design;
- A phased site clearance to ensure that not all the habitat is cleared at once;

5.5.6 Invertebrates - impact characterisation with mitigation

It is considered that there will be an **unlikely minor short term adverse impact** at a **local (site)** level as a result of the proposed development.

5.5.7 Invertebrates - significance of the impact

Without mitigation

It is considered that the significance of the impact is **slight**.

With mitigation

It is considered that the significance of the impact is **neutral**.

5.6 OTTER AND BADGER

There was no evidence to suggest that these species use the site currently, however, there is suitable habitat on site (woodland and river). These habitats will be fenced off and protected from the development from both direct and indirect impacts. There will be no lighting of the river and woodland. A pre-commencement check for these species will need to be undertaken prior to works commencing. If at any point these species are found on site, all works will cease and NRW will be consulted.

6 CONCLUSION

A number of habitats were identified at the proposed development site. Of the habitats identified, it was determined that the majority were of a low - moderate ecological value.

Overall, it is concluded that the site is of moderate ecological value at a local site level.

The presence of reptiles and amphibians should be assumed.

The presence of breeding birds in scrub should be assumed between March and August.

Mitigation will be required as described in the individual sections above.

This PEA and the recommendations as described in the sections above will require updating on completion of a final design and layout and in light of any planning requirements. A data search will also be required.

There will be strictly no lighting to the river and retained woodlands. Lighting plans will need to be provided as part of any planning application.

Retained grassland within the ownership boundary will be managed to benefit wildlife.

7 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A – PHOTOS







APPENDIX B – METHOD STATEMENT- REPTILES

1. All clearance will be supervised by a suitably experienced ecologist until such time as the ecologist states that direct supervision is not necessary.
2. The ecologist will be on call for the duration of clearance works.
3. Vegetation will be cleared from directly affected areas only and the area minimised wherever possible.
4. All vegetation and brash removal will preferentially be undertaken during the winter months i.e. between November and February inclusive.
5. If this is not possible, all areas to be cleared must be subject of a finger-tip search by an ecologist immediately prior to and during any clearance work; the ecologist should also be present while all post hole excavation (or other ground breaking should it be required) is being undertaken.
6. Should evidence of breeding birds, in particularly nests, be recorded, no clearance may be undertaken within 5m of any nest site until such time as the nest is vacated naturally.
7. No spraying of vegetation to be carried out. Vegetation will be maintained close to ground using repeated cutting only. 1x Hibernaculum will be added to an area of the garden remaining unaffected by the development. Materials already onsite (e.g., brash, logs) will be used.
8. Woody vegetation will be cleared (ONLY IF NECESSARY) to ground level using a chainsaw with all arisings stacked in unaffected areas NOT on areas of tall vegetation (over 300mm). Where necessary, stumps and roots will only be removed by machine (under ecological supervision) once the clearance is complete.
9. All woody vegetation will be checked by the ecologist prior to cutting for the presence of bird nests.
10. Vegetation will be cut in three phases. The first phase will reduce the vegetation height to 150mm; the second will reduce it to ~50mm; the third phase will reduce the height to as close to ground level as possible. All cuts will have a period of 24 hours between each cut.
11. All vegetation cutting will be directional. This ensures that any animals present will be pushed from the site into adjacent retained habitats.
12. After clearance, if the vegetation is allowed to regrow above 150mm high, it will be cut and raked as described above.
- 13. Where necessary, potential hibernacula (brash, log piles, stumps, roots etc) will only be cleared during the active season (March-October) while day time temperatures are consistently over 12°C for a period of at least seven days prior as otherwise reptiles may be killed or injured as a result of inconsistent (low) temperatures (during the day and night) and/or low prey availability. Potential hibernacula will only be dismantled by hand unless the supervising ecologist gives the approval for machine dismantling.**
14. If a bird's nest is observed on the site, the ecologist will assess it to determine whether or not it is active, the species concerned, the lifecycle state of any occupants and provide advice on next steps.
15. If reptiles are observed within the clearance area during the works, a decision on how to deal with them will be made on site in light of the conditions on site at the time and the state of the animals themselves. There are three options for dealing with them:
 - It may be possible to leave the animals alone to find their own way into cover, depending on where they are seen, what they are doing and their apparent activity levels; or

- Capture, remove from site and take into temporary captivity until such time as they can be released adjacent to the cleared area (a vivarium has been prepared in case it is required); or
- Should conditions allow, capture and translocate the animals to a safe area immediately adjacent to the site.

16. Habitat and the unlikely presence for other species (e.g. dormice, otter, great crested newts & other amphibians etc.) can be identified and avoided by following this method statement.

17. In the event that a European Protected Species such as great crested newt or dormouse is observed during the clearance,, all work will stop, and the ecologist consulted. It will be necessary to consult with Natural Resources Wales; further surveys and a development licence may be required before work can recommence.

If large numbers of reptiles are discovered, an offsite receptor area should be suggested to be agreed by the County Ecologist.

NOTE: should it be required, a Natural Resources Wales development licence for European Protected Species is likely to take up to 30 working days to be issued following submission

In Summary the works will proceed as follows:

1. Vegetation reduced to 150mm	Any time of year (following an inspection for breeding birds if undertaken during active season)
2. Vegetation reduced to 50mm	24 hours after first cut
3. Vegetation cut to ground level	25 hours after second cut
4. Removal of potential hibernacula (stumps, rubble piles etc)	Preferably March to October or when temperatures have been above 12 degrees for a period of seven days or more
The site will be kept as close to bare ground as possible via repeated cutting to ensure that reptiles do not re-colonise the site.	

APPENDIX C – SPECIES LIST

Main site

black knapweed meadow buttercup, common birdfppt trefoil, hop trefoil, black meddick, curled dock, enchanter's nightshade, cocksfoot, broad leaved dock, bramble, dandelion, wood avens, higgweed, common bent, creeping bent, red fescue, rosebay willowherb, ribwort plantain, yorkshire fog, meadow soft brome, wild strawberry, self heal, rough and smooth meadowgrass, red clover, creeping buttercup, white clover I, chickweed springy turfmoor, field bindweed, ragwort, oxeye daisy. Common sedge, driphthera fern, knotweed, bracken

Boundaries

pedunculate oak, alder, silver birch, grey willow, ash, leylandii, over hazel and bramble