



Residential Development at Bay View, Port Talbot

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

April 2024

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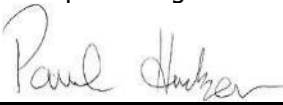
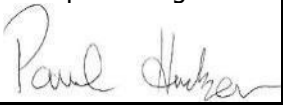
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Document Verification Table

Residential Development at Bay View, Port Talbot Preliminary Ecological Appraisal				
Revision	Date	Prepared by	Checked by	Verified by
1.0	17 April 2024	Rebecca Corley Assistant Ecologist 	Paul Hudson MCIEEM Principal Ecologist 	Paul Hudson MCIEEM Principal Ecologist 

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Summary

Brief and Site Location	Acer Ecology Ltd. were instructed to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal of land at Bay View, Port Talbot, SA13 2ET, within the boundary of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference centred at: SS 7733 9076).
Development Proposals	The proposed development works comprise the development of three residential plots and associated parking spaces. Vegetation will be cleared to facilitate development. The proposed development plan is provided in Appendix 1.
Impacts to Key Receptors	No statutory or non-statutory designated sites are anticipated to be affected by the proposed works. No habitats on site are likely to be greater than local value. Whilst the loss of the on-site habitats would be unlikely to have a significant impact outside of the context of the site, it would nevertheless be desirable that the impacts be either minimised or appropriately mitigated where possible. The proposed development could potentially have adverse impacts of varying degrees on a range of legally protected species. There is a high risk of impact to bats, nesting birds and reptiles, and a lower risk of impacts to GCN, dormice and hedgehogs. It is considered essential that the appropriate mitigation measures are set in place to avoid or minimise impacts to these species.
Invasive Species	The development may result in the spread of Japanese knotweed, an invasive plant species. Measures to prevent this are set out in Section 4.
Further Surveys	Further surveys are recommended so that the potential for further impacts can be established.
Recommendations	The following provisional recommendations have been developed based on the development proposals available at the time of writing. They may be subject to change upon receipt of the final design: • Further Survey: • Bat activity surveys (one activity transect each season between April to October inclusive, supplemented by the deployment of three static detectors, left to record for five consecutive nights each month); • Bat dusk emergence surveys of trees being felled with moderate or high bat roosting suitability proposed; • Dormouse nest tube survey (50 nest tubes deployed on site from between April and November – sufficient months to be surveyed to achieve 20 points); • Reptile surveys (to identify the presence or absence of reptiles on site, between April and September); and • Common bird census survey (three site visits between March and June to identify the number of breeding birds present and their territories). • Precautionary measures – Timing of works for birds; Precautionary measures for great crested newts; Precautionary measures for otters; Good construction practices for mammals. • Compensation and enhancement measures – Compensatory woodland planting / management plan for retained woodland. • Mitigation measures – Protective measures for retained habitats; Eradication of Japanese knotweed and snowberry.

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Licensing Requirements	A European protected species mitigation licence may be required upon completion of further surveys.
Conclusions	The full extent of ecological impacts and potential constraints of the proposed development cannot be fully determined, based on the results of the preliminary ecological appraisal survey alone. Further survey work will be required before such assessments can be comprehensively made. If development works do not begin within eighteen months to two years of the date of this report of this report, an update survey is likely to be required in accordance with guidance from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) (CIEEM, 2019) and BS 42020:2013, to determine if conditions have changed since those described in this report.

1. Introduction

1.1. Brief and Site Location

Acer Ecology Ltd. were instructed to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal of land at Bay View, Port Talbot, SA13 2ET, within the boundary of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference centred at: SS 7733 9076)¹. The assessment documents the baseline ecological condition of the survey area, which is shown by the red line boundary on Plan 1. Designated sites, habitats, protected and notable species of conservation interest that could be affected by the proposed works are identified, and subsequent recommendations provided.

This assessment will provide initial recommendations based on the development proposals available at the time of writing. They should be revised upon finalisation of the design.

1.2. Site Description

The site proposed for development measures approximately 1.1ha and is located on the northern outskirts of the town of Port Talbot. It mainly comprises mixed broadleaved woodland and areas of bracken and scrub. The site is bordered to the north and south by residential properties and associated gardens, and an ancient semi-natural woodland to the west. The River Afan is also situated 0.1km west of the site.

1.3. Proposed Works

The development proposals are yet to be finalised at the time of the preliminary ecological appraisal. At the time of writing, the proposed development works comprises the development of the site into three residential plots and associated parking spaces, and potentially a small amenity space. Vegetation will be cleared to facilitate development.

The proposed development plan is provided in Appendix 1.

1.4. Scope of the Study

The study comprised the following:

- A desk study to identify existing information on statutory and non-statutory sites of nature conservation interest, and records of notable or protected habitats or species within the site and its environs;
- A Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the site, extended to search for evidence of, and potential for, protected fauna; and
- Identification of potential ecological constraints to the proposed works at the site and assessments of impacts including appropriate mitigation measures where necessary.

¹ Latitude and Longitude: 51.60218657, -3.77272102 / what3words: games.spice.souk

1.5. Reporting

This report aims to:

- Outline the methodology used during the survey;
- Present the baseline ecological information;
- Provide an ecological evaluation of on-site habitats, including an assessment of the potential for protected species;
- Assess the potential impacts of the development proposals on ecological receptors;
- Assess the potential ecological constraints to the proposals; and
- Provide recommendations for further survey, avoidance, mitigation and enhancement where appropriate.

2. Methods

The survey was undertaken following standard methods as detailed in the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Preliminary Ecological Appraisal 2017 guidelines, and the Phase 1 Habitat Survey manual (Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 2010). The methodology utilised for the survey work comprised a desk study, habitat survey and a survey of protected and notable species.

2.1. Desk Study

2.1.1. Protected Sites, Habitats and Species

Information on designated sites and protected species was obtained from the sources detailed in Table 2. The legislation and policy relating to statutory and non-statutory designated sites can be found in Appendix 2. Plans 2 and 3 show the protected sites in relation to the proposed development site.

Table 1: Summary of Designated Sites and Other Abbreviations

Abbreviations	
Special Areas of Conservation	SAC
Special Protected Area	SPA
Site of Special Scientific Interest	SSSI
National Nature Reserve	NNR
Local Nature Reserve	LNR
Site of Importance for Nature Conservation	SINC
Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland	ASNW
Restored Ancient Woodland Site	RAWS
Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site	PAWS
Natural Resources Wales	NRW
South East Wales Biological Records Centre	SEWBRc

Table 2: Sources of Data

Source	Data	Radius of Search
NRW Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Layers	Statutory and non-statutory nature conservation designated sites ASNW, RAWS and PAWS	Ramsar/SACs/SPAs/SSSIs/NNRs/LNRs – 2km ² SACs (designated for bats) - 10km. 2km.
SEWBRc	Protected species records (SEWBRc unique reference: 0223-777) SINC	1km. 1km.

All available records of bat roosts, badger, dormouse, amphibians and reptiles were considered. For other species, only records collected within the last 10 years were considered relevant.

² The citations of all the SSSIs and SACs within 2km of the site were consulted to determine if any of them had features or species which could be affected by the development proposals.

The protected species search of 1km is considered appropriate. Page 15 of CIEEM's Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisals states that 'Existing ecological information for the site and adjacent areas should extend to at least 1km from the site boundaries (or 0.5 km for sites of approximately 1 ha or less). The search for desk study information will need to extend further beyond the site boundaries to ensure that all information of relevance to the assessment has been collected. In this instance a 1km data search for protected species is considered appropriate.

2.1.2. Landscape Context

The site and wider landscape were assessed and characterised using aerial images, Ordnance Survey maps and SEWBRc data. The presence of off-site features and habitats, which add to the ecological value within the wider area (for example, ponds within 0.5km of the site) were identified. Where appropriate, such features were scoped into the detailed assessment of impacts presented in Section 3.

2.1.3. Ancient Woodland

Although ancient woodland is not a designated site as such, it is often listed as a designated site due to its ecological significance and associated protection. Ancient woodland has therefore been included within the non-statutory designated site section of this report.

2.1.4. Planning Authority

The Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Planning portal³ was consulted to determine if any previous survey information was available for the site, or immediate surroundings.

2.2. Field Study

2.2.1. Personnel

The field survey was undertaken in good weather on the 27th January 2023 by Paul Hudson MCIEEM⁴, Megan Fowler⁵, and Rebecca Corley⁶.

2.2.2. Vegetation and Habitats

The vegetation and habitat types present within the survey area were categorised and mapped in accordance with the standard⁷ Phase 1 Habitat assessment methodology (Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 2010), dominant and conspicuous plant species were recorded for each habitat. Target notes

³ <https://planningonline.npt.gov.uk/online-applications/>

⁴ Paul graduated with a degree in Environmental Biology from Reading University and a Postgraduate Diploma in Conservation Management from the University of East Anglia. He is experienced in undertaking preliminary ecological appraisals and has been involved in ecological survey work since 2001. He has undertaken extensive training in protected species assessment, phase 1 habitat surveys and botanical surveying. Further details of his qualifications and experience can be found at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/batsurvey>.

⁵ Megan graduated with an Undergraduate Masters in Zoology with Climate Change from Bangor University in 2019 and has recently completed an MSc in Conservation Biology from Manchester Metropolitan University. She has undertaken conservation work in Mexico and with several UK-based organisations.

⁶ Rebecca graduated with a degree in Biological Science from the University of Birmingham and an MSc in Global Ecology and Conservation from Cardiff University. Rebecca is currently in her first season of bat surveying, working as an Assistant Ecologist and receiving training from Acer Ecology. She is listed as an accredited agent on Paul Hudson's bat licence (S091671-1). Further details of her qualifications and experience can be found at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rebecca-corley-b33b61138>.

⁷ Some additional categories were also used if applicable e.g. hard standing and Japanese knotweed.

were used to record information on features of ecological interest, such as evidence of, or habitats with potential to support protected species or where any features of interest too small to map were recorded. Following the completion of the survey, a colour-coded habitat plan was digitised using QGIS to show the extent and distribution of the different habitat types present within the site (see Plan 4).

Section 7 habitats (Environment Wales Act 2016) and Priority Habitats of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) (Biodiversity Reporting & Information Group, 2007) were identified and assessed to determine if the site meets the non-statutory designated site criteria (SINC).

Invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9⁸ of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), such as Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) were also noted during the survey, if present.

2.2.3. Protected and Notable Species

Evidence of, and habitats with, potential to support protected or notable species were noted, especially species meeting any of the following criteria:

- Listed under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) [‘CHSAEU’] Regulations 2019;
- Listed under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 as being of principal importance for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in Wales;
- Listed as a local priority for conservation, for example in the relevant Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP);
- Red Listed using International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) criteria (e.g. in one of the UK Species Status Project⁹ reviews, in the Species of Conservation Concern Red, Amber or Near Threatened List¹⁰, Birds of Conservation Concern in Wales¹¹, or, where a more recent assessment of the taxonomic group has not yet been undertaken, listed in a Red Data Book);
- Listed as a Nationally Rare or Nationally Scarce species (e.g. in one of the Species Status Project reviews) or listed as a Nationally Notable species where a more recent assessment of the taxonomic group has not yet been undertaken; and/or
- Endemic to a country or geographic location (it is appropriate to recognise endemic sub-species, phenotypes, or cultural behaviours of a population that are unique to a particular place).

Only those species with potential to be present on-site are mentioned within this report. The methodologies used were as follows:

⁸ Schedule 9 species of plants and animals are ones that do not naturally occur in Great Britain but have become established in the wild and represent a threat to the natural fauna and flora.

⁹ The Species Status project is the successor to the JNCC’s Species Status Assessment project, providing up-to-date assessments of the threat status of various taxa using the internationally accepted Red List guidelines (<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1773>).

¹⁰ Eaton *et al.* (2015) Birds of conservation concern 4: the population status of birds in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man. British Birds 108: 708-746.

¹¹ Johnstone, I. and Bladwell, S. (2016) Birds of Conservation Concern in Wales 3: the population status of birds in Wales. Birds in Wales 13 (1).

Birds

Any birds observed during the field survey were recorded, in addition to features capable of supporting nesting birds (e.g. trees, hedgerows, buildings, bramble, ruderal vegetation and rough grassland etc.). The site was also assessed for its actual and potential suitability to support Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Schedule 1 species.

A comprehensive bird survey, such as a breeding bird survey, was not undertaken as this was beyond the scope of the assessment.

Bats

Preliminary Ground-level Roost Assessment

A preliminary ground-level roost assessment of the trees within the survey area was undertaken, looking for features that bats could use for roosting (Potential Roost Features¹² (PRF) and evidence of bats (i.e. droppings in, around or below a PRF; odour emanating from a PRF; audible squeaking at dusk or during warm weather; or staining below the PRF). A systematic inspection was carried out around all accessible aspects of the tree, from both close to the trunk and further away.

The trees were assessed for their suitability to support roosting and hibernating bats in accordance with Table 4.1 of the Bat Conservation Trusts Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016) (See Appendix 6). A high-powered torch (Clulite), binoculars and a ladder were used as appropriate during the survey.

The survey results were added into the table from the Arboricultural Report (ArbTS, 2020), detailed within Table 6 of this report.

Daytime Internal and External Building Inspection

A systematic search of the exterior and interior of the small building to the west of the site was undertaken, looking for features that bats could use for entry/exit and roosting¹³ and to search for the presence of bats or evidence of bat use, such as droppings, feeding remains, urine staining, scratch marks and the remains of dead bats.¹⁴ A high-powered torch (Clulite) and binoculars were used as appropriate during the survey.

The location of the building is shown in Plan 4.

¹² Potential Roost Features that bats may use identified by Andrews include: woodpecker-holes; squirrel-holes; knot-holes; pruning-cuts; tear-outs; wounds; cankers; compression-forks; butt-rots; lightning strikes; hazard-beams; subsidence-cracks; shearing cracks; transverse cracks; welds; lifting bark; frost-cracks; fluting and ivy.

¹³ Bats may utilise gaps as small as 8mm by 20mm (Bat Conservation Trust, Cluster flies leaflet)

¹⁴ Rebecca graduated with a degree in Biological Science from the University of Birmingham and an MSc in Global Ecology and Conservation from Cardiff University. Rebecca is currently in her first season of bat surveying, working as an Assistant Ecologist and receiving training from Acer Ecology. She is listed as an accredited agent on Paul Hudson's bat licence (S091671-1). Further details of her qualifications and experience can be found at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rebecca-corley-b33b61138>.

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Terrestrial Habitat Assessment

A preliminary assessment of the value of the site for bats (and any potential roost sites therein) was made in accordance with Table 4.1 of the Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists (Collins, 2023) (see Appendix 4). The assessment was based on the relative abundance and quality of habitat features within the site, and surrounding landscape, suitable for roosting, foraging and commuting bats.

Dormice

The woodland and scrub were assessed for their suitability to support dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*). The structure and composition of these habitats within the site were assessed with respect to the presence of flower, fruit or nut-bearing food-plants such as hazel (*Corylus avellana*) (a favoured food-plant of dormice), oak (*Quercus* sp.), honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), as well as other trees and shrubs listed in the Dormouse Conservation Handbook (Bright, Morris & Mitchell-Jones, 2006) as being of value to dormice. In addition, connectivity to other areas of suitable habitat in the wider landscape, such as hedgerows and woodland, was assessed.

No hazel was present on site and therefore it was not possible to undertake a search for hazelnut shells to determine if they had been opened by dormice. Additionally, a full nest tube/box/footprint tunnel survey was not undertaken as this was beyond the scope of the assessment.

Great Crested Newts

The survey area was appraised for its suitability to support great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) (GCN). The assessment was based on guidance outlined in the Herpetofauna Workers' Manual (Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 2003) and the Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook (Langton, Beckett & Foster, 2001).

Ordnance Survey maps and aerial images of the land surrounding the site were consulted to identify one waterbody which is located within 0.5km of the development site (see Plan 6). The Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) (Oldham *et al.*, 2006) was applied to this waterbody.

Otters

A preliminary assessment for signs of otter (*Lutra lutra*) was undertaken following the advice provided by Strachan & Jefferies (1996) and Chanin (2003). Where access was available, the banks of the River Afan were searched for evidence of otter activity within 10m of the bank. Field signs of otter were recorded if present including spraints (faeces showing food remains), footprints, feeding remains and couches (above ground resting sites normally in thick vegetation cover), as well as potential or actual breeding sites and resting places (i.e. holts or natal dens) which are usually found under roots of bank side trees or in rock piles.

A full otter survey was not undertaken as this was beyond the scope of the assessment.

Badgers

Earth embankments, wooded copses, hedgerows and dense bramble beds are habitat features that often contain evidence of badgers (*Meles meles*). Where present on-site, these and other suitable habitat features were searched for such evidence. Where present, the location of badger signs such as setts, runs, dung pits or latrines, prints, hair and foraging snuffle holes were recorded.

A full badger survey was not undertaken as it was beyond the scope of this assessment.

Reptiles

An assessment of the suitability of on-site habitats to support reptiles was made. Reptiles require a diverse range of habitats to meet their needs such as hedgerows, scrub, rough grassland, woodpiles, rubble, banks and compost heaps. The potential of the site to provide hibernation opportunities and spring/summer/autumn habitat was also assessed, with reference to guidance provided in the Herpetofauna Workers' Manual (Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 2003), the Reptile Management Handbook (Edgar, Foster & Baker, 2011) and the Reptile Mitigation Guidelines Technical Note TIN 102 (Natural England, 2013). The following factors were considered: vegetation type and structure; insolation (sun exposure); slope aspect; topography; surface geology; habitat connectivity; habitat size; prey abundance; refuge opportunity; hibernation opportunity; egg-laying potential for grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*); public pressure; percentage of shade; levels of disturbance and management regime.

A targeted presence/likely absence reptile survey was not undertaken as it was beyond the scope of this assessment.

Hedgehogs

The sites potential to support hedgehog was assessed using guidance of habitats of importance in Hedgehogs and Development (unknown year) with the following habitats particularly favoured: dense scrub to build hibernation nests in during the winter; short grass to forage in for invertebrate prey; longer grass to forage in and to make nests in during the summer; areas of leaf litter to collect and use for hibernation nests; log piles and decaying vegetation to forage in and hibernate in; and hedgerows and boundary vegetation that are important corridors for travel and nesting sites.

Other Species

General habitat suitability and incidental sightings of other animal species were also noted.

2.2.4. Assessment of Ecological Value

The value of the habitats and features of the site have been provisionally evaluated and graded in accordance with a geographical frame of reference as detailed in Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom and Ireland (CIEEM, 2018). The level of value of specific ecological receptors is assigned using a geographic frame of reference, i.e. international value being most important,

then national, regional, county, district, local and, lastly, within the immediate zone of influence of the site only. Brief descriptions of how Acer Ecology interprets these categories are set out in Appendix 4.

2.2.5. Constraints and Limitations

General Temporal Constraints

Any ecological survey can only identify what was present on-site at the time the survey was conducted and habitat usage by species can change over time.

Seasonality of Survey

The present survey was undertaken outside of the optimal survey period for certain species of flora and fauna (January), with many species having died back or having become inconspicuous at the time of the survey. The survey can be considered as providing a reasonable, though not exhaustive or full, plant list. The survey noted the habitat types present on site and the dominant vegetation at the time of the survey, which is likely to be constant and a fair reflection of the habitat quality present.

Incomplete Survey Information

Full surveys for the protected species listed previously have not yet been carried out. For some species of fauna for which evidence has been found or which are considered likely to occur on site, further targeted survey is advisable at a more appropriate time of year (see Section 4).

3. Baseline Ecological Conditions, Evaluation and Development Impacts

The baseline conditions and evaluation of the *in-situ* habitats and the actual/ potential presence of protected species are discussed in this section. Potential impacts on protected sites, *in-situ* habitats and protected or notable species arising from the proposed development are identified, including both direct and indirect impacts, and those associated with construction and operational stages.

A summary of relevant legislation and planning policies relating to protected sites, habitats and species is provided in Appendices 2 and 3.

3.1. Statutory Nature Conservation Designated Sites

Statutory Sites (SACs or SSSIs) Designated for Bats within 10km of the Site

No SACs or SSSIs specially designated for bats lie within 10km of the site.

RAMSARs, SPAs, SACs, SSSIs, NNRs, LNRs, National Parks and AONBs within 2km of the Site

There are no statutory sites designated for their conservation value within 2km of the site.

3.2. Non-statutory Nature Conservation Designated Sites

SINCs

The proposed development site lies within 2km of the following non-statutory sites:

Table 3: Non-Statutory Sites Designated Within 2km

Site Name	Designation	Description	Distance and Direction from Development Site	Development Impacts
NPT Watercourses ¹⁵	SINC	This SINC is comprised of all watercourses in Neath Port Talbot that retain a generally natural form.	Within the site.	There will be no adverse impacts to the NPT watercourses SINC as a result of the development.

Ancient Woodland Sites

The following table shows the ancient woodland sites within 2km of the site:

¹⁵ Reference was taken from Neath Port Talbot, Megan Price Ecologist after emailing to request citation.

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Table 4: Ancient Woodland Sites Within 2km

Ancient Woodland Site	Number within 2km of Site
Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) ⁷³	25
Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) ⁷⁵	Six
Ancient Woodland Sites of Unknown Category ⁷⁶	Three
Nearest Area of Ancient Woodland	An unnamed area of ASNW located 77m to the west of the site.

3.3. Habitats and Vegetation

The results of the general survey of habitats and vegetation are shown on Plan 4. A botanical species list is provided in Appendix 4.

The site consists of following elements which are described in detail overleaf. These comprise:

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Table 4: Phase 1 Habitat Descriptions

Phase 1 Habitat	UK Habs Habitat	Description	Ecological Value	Development Impacts
Broadleaved Semi-Natural Woodland (A1.1.1)	W1f7 Other Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Broadleaved semi-natural woodland is the dominant habitat type on the site, and is located to the east and west of site. Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>), pedunculate oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>) and goat willow (<i>Salix caprea</i>) are abundant in the canopy layer. Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>) is also frequent. The field layer is dominated by ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>). Other frequent species present include soft shield fern (<i>Polystichum setiferum</i>), broad buckler fern (<i>Dryopteris dilatata</i>), hart's-tongue fern (<i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i>), scaly male fern (<i>Dryopteris affinis</i>), and bramble (<i>Rubus</i> spp.). Foxgloves (<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>), and garden geranium (<i>Geranium</i> sp.) are occasional. Detailed tree descriptions are provided in Section 3.5.3.	Listed under Section 7 of the Environment Wales Act 2016 as being of principal importance within Wales¹⁶. Local value. UK Habs Medium distinctiveness.	Proposed plans state that the semi-natural broadleaved woodland to the east of the site is to be retained, and no direct impacts are anticipated. However, a large area of the broadleaved woodland to the west of the site is to be cleared to allow for the development. This may cause direct impacts to protected species as a result of habitat loss and injury/ death as a result of vegetation clearance. Additionally, any limbs removed as a result of pruning may have direct impacts to protected species, and there may be damage as a result of heavy plant movement over the root protection areas and accidental damage during construction activities. Recommendations to avoid and mitigate such

¹⁶ <https://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/environment-wales-act>

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				impacts are presented in Section 4.
Scattered Trees		Ten Swedish whitebeams (<i>Sorbus intermedia</i>) are located in the area of semi-improved grassland at the north-east of the site. Detailed tree descriptions are provided in Section 3.5.3.	Site Value. UK Habs Medium distinctiveness.	The trees will be retained as part of the development.
Dense Scrub (A2.1)	Heathland and shrub - Mixed scrub (h3)	Dense scrub is located to the north, north-west, and south-east of the site. Bramble is the dominant species present. Bracken (<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>) is also abundant in the scrub to the north of the site.	Site Value. UK Habs Medium distinctiveness.	Clearance of the site to facilitate the new development will result in the permanent loss of areas of this habitat. This may cause habitat loss and death or injury to protected species. Recommendations to avoid and mitigate such impacts are presented in Section 4.
Poor Semi-improved Grassland (B6)	Modified grassland (g4)	An area of poor semi-improved grassland is located to the north-east of the site. In some localised areas, it is dominated by cock's-foot (<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>). Elsewhere, Yorkshire fog (<i>Holcus lanatus</i>) and red fescue (<i>Festuca rubra</i>) are the dominant grasses. Perennial rye-grass (<i>Lolium perenne</i>) is scarce throughout. Forbs include abundant creeping buttercup (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>), common dandelion (<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>), and daisy (<i>Bellis perennis</i>). Other occasional species recorded here include ribwort plantain (<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>), broad-leaved dock (<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>), ragwort (<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>), common catsear (<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>), sorrel (<i>Rumex acetosa</i>), yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>), and mouse-ear chickweed (<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>).	Site Value. UK Habs Low Distinctiveness.	Proposed plans highlight that a small area of this site could be used for allotment gardens. This would not have any direct impacts to the habitat or any protected species present.

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Continuous Bracken (C1.1)	Bracken (g1c)	There is an area of continuous bracken to the north of the site. Bracken is overwhelmingly dominant and forms over 95% cover of the stand of vegetation.	Site Value. UK Habs Low Distinctiveness.	Clearance of the site to facilitate the new development will result in the permanent loss of areas of this habitat. This may cause habitat loss and death or injury to protected species. Recommendations to avoid and mitigate such impacts are presented in Section 4.
Introduced shrub (J1.4)	Urban Introduced Shrub	A small section of urban introduced shrub is present along the northern boundary of the site. A small apple tree (<i>Malus domestica</i>), cherry laurel (<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>), Japanese skimmia (<i>Skimmia trivialis</i>), and bamboo (<i>Bambusa vulgaris</i>) are present.	Site Value. UK Hab Low Distinctiveness.	It is unclear in the proposed development plans whether the areas of introduced shrub are to be cleared or retained during the development. However, if it is to be cleared, this may cause death or injury to protected species. Recommendations to avoid and mitigate such impacts are presented in Section 4.
Defunct Species-Poor Hedgerow (J.2.2.2.)	Other hedgerow (h2b)	An overgrown privet (<i>Ligustrum ovalifolium</i>) hedgerow is present within the semi-natural broadleaved woodland to the west of the site.	Site Value. UK Habs Low Distinctiveness.	Clearance of the site to facilitate the new development will result in the permanent loss of this habitat. This may cause habitat loss and death or injury to protected species. Recommendations to avoid and mitigate such

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				impacts are presented in Section 4.
Fence (J3.4)	Urban-Built Features Linear	A timber fence surrounds the western border of the site. It is non-functional and has been pushed over by fallen trees and branches. Another timber fence is also located to the south of the site, and separates the small house and woodland to the east of the site from the area of hardstanding.	Negligible Value UK Habs Very Low Distinctiveness.	It is not clear whether the fences are to be retained during the development. However, if it were to be removed, it would have negligible impacts to the habitats or protected species on site.
Stone Wall	Urban-Built Features Linear	A small stone wall is present to the south of the site. It is covered by dense scrub. It has large cavities where the mortar has eroded away between the stones.	Site Value UK Habs Very Low Distinctiveness.	The stone wall will be retained as part of the development. There will be no direct impacts to protected species.
Japanese Knotweed stand ¹⁷		There is a large stand of Japanese knotweed (<i>Fallopia japonica</i>) to the south of the site, and also two larger stands in the semi-natural broadleaved woodland to the west of the site, just to the west of the hardstanding.	Site Value UK Habs Very Low Distinctiveness.	Japanese knotweed will require eradication from the site. Detailed recommendations are provided in Section 4.
Buildings (J.3.6)	Urban - Developed land; sealed surface (u1b)	A small, derelict shed composed of corrugated metal is located to the west of the site. It is missing sections of the corrugated metal sheeting, particularly on the roof. Pieces of sheeting are located on the ground near the building. A detailed building description is provided in Section 3.5.3 below.	Site value UK Habs Very Low distinctiveness.	The shed will be cleared from the site to facilitate the new development. This has negligible potential to be used as by roosting bats, however, there may be negative impacts to reptiles using the discarded corrugated metal sheets as refugia. Detailed

¹⁷ Habitat not included within the Phase 1 Handbook (JNCC 2010)

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				recommendations are provided in Section 4.
Hard Standing ¹³	Urban - Developed land; sealed surface (u1b)	A concrete path runs through the centre of the site. This habitat conforms to urban; developed land, sealed surface with very low distinctiveness within the UK hubs.	Negligible value.	The hardstanding will be retained as part of the development.

As the impact of the proposals are to be confined to the development footprint it is not anticipated that there will be any adverse impact to the habitats off site.

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Photo 1: Semi-Natural Broadleaved Woodland (East)



Photo 2: Semi-Natural Broadleaved Woodland (West)



Photo 3: Scattered Trees and Poor Semi-Improved Grassland



Photo 4: Dense Scrub (North)



Photo 5: Dense Scrub (South-East)



Photo 6: Continuous Bracken



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Photo 6: Japanese Knotweed (South)



Photo 7: Japanese Knotweed (West)



Photo 8: Introduced Shrub



Photo 9: Defunct Species-Poor Hedge



Photo 10: Hardstanding and Fence (South)



Photo 11: Western Fence (Circled)



Photo 12: Derelict Shed



Photo 13: Stone Wall



3.4. Invasive Plant Species

Details of the invasive species on site are described in detail below:

Table 5: Invasive Species Descriptions

Species	Occurrence on Site	Legislation	Assessment of Potential Development Impacts
Japanese knotweed ¹⁸	A large stand of Japanese knotweed is located at the southernmost end of the site. There are additional stands within the semi-natural broad-leaved woodland to the west of the path.	Schedule 9 invasive plant. A non-native species that poses a conservation threat to native biodiversity and habitats, such that further releases should be regulated. This species has a negative effect on the biodiversity of the site.	Japanese knotweed will require eradication from the site. Detailed recommendations are provided in Section 4.
Snowberry	A small stand of snowberry is present on the western side of the path at the northern end of the site.	Whilst this site is not listed as a Schedule 9 invasive species, it is still a fairly invasive species and should be eradicated from the site.	Snowberry will require eradication from the site. Detailed recommendations are provided in Section 4.

3.5. Protected and Notable Species

3.5.1. Notable Plant Species

Data Trawl Results

SEWBRc returned records of a large number of (including species regarded as 'Locally Important', LBAP species and UK Red Data Book-listed species).

¹⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/schedule/9>

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One priority plant species was recorded within 1km of the site, namely: bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*). However, bluebell is mainly protected from sale via its listing under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

One plant listed as species of conservation concern was recorded within 1km of the site, namely: welsh poppy (*Meconopsis cambrica*).

12 plant listed as locally important species were recorded within 1km of the site, namely: fragrant agrimony (*Agrimonia procera*), pyramidal orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*), yellow-wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*), viper's-bugloss (*Echium vulgare*), small cudweed (*Filago minima*), mare's-tail (*Hippuris vulgaris*), luzula multiflora subsp. congesta (*Luzula multiflora subsp. congesta*), ree-mallow (*Malva arborea*), common broomrape (*Orobancha minor*), hawkweed ox-tongue (*Picris hieracioides*), wild mignonette (*Reseda lutea*) and knotted pearlwort (*Sagina nodosa*).

However, none of the records provided relate to the proposed development site.

Field Survey Results

No plant species, which individually are considered to be of either of national, regional or local significance were recorded on the site.

3.5.2. Birds

Desk Study Results

SEWBRc returned records of 32 priority bird species within 1km of the site, namely: lesser redpoll (*Acanthis cabaret*), goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), tree pipit (*Anthus trivialis*), nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*), cetti's warbler (*Cettia cetti*), black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*), cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), dartford warbler (*Curruca undata*), lesser spotted woodpecker (*Dryobates minor*), reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*), peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*), kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*), herring gull (*Larus argentatus*), linnet (*Linaria cannabina*), crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*), red kite (*Milvus milvus*), spotted flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*), house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), wood warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*), golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*), dunnoek (*Prunella modularis*), bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), firecrest (*Regulus ignicapilla*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), redwing (*Turdus iliacus*), song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*), barn owl (*Tyto alba*) and lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*).

28 birds listed as species of conservation concern were recorded within 1km of the site, namely: long-tailed tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*), razorbill (*Alca torda*), teal (*Anas crecca*), mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), meadow pipit (*Anthus pratensis*), swift (*Apus apus*), grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*), tufted duck (*Aythya fuligula*), greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*), dipper (*Cinclus cinclus*), whitethroat (*Curruca communis*), coot (*Fulica atra*), swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), common gull (*Larus canus*), lesser black-backed gull (*Larus fuscus*), great black-backed gull (*Larus marinus*), grey wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*), wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*), cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*), willow warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*), green

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woodpecker (*Picus viridis*), manx shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*), goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*), sand martin (*Riparia riparia*), woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*), mistle thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*) and common sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*).

SEWBRc did not return any birds listed as locally important species or other species within 1km of the site.

Field Survey Results

A low number of birds were recorded on site, including: blackbird (*Turdus merula*), mistle thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*), nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*), and robin (*Erithacus rubecula*). All of the bird activity was recorded in the semi-natural broadleaved woodland.

Nesting and Activity

Two defunct nests were recorded in the trees within the semi-natural broadleaved woodland to the east and west of the site.

Photo 13: Defunct Birds Nest (East)



Photo 14 Defunct Birds Nest (West, Circled)



Evaluation of Ecological Value of Site for Birds

The semi-natural broadleaved woodland, defunct hedgerow, scrub, and scattered broadleaved trees provide nesting and foraging opportunities for a range of tree and scrub nesting species, including potentially a range of UK BAP and Red List species such as bullfinches, starlings and red kites, which have all historically been recorded in close proximity to the site. The poor semi-improved grassland is considered unsuitable for use by ground-nesting species due to the short nature of the sward.

As a whole, the site is considered to be of local value to birds. It contains numerous features that offer suitable habitats for birds, but all these features are widespread in the surrounding landscape, particularly to the north-west of the site.

Impact Assessment of Proposed Development on Birds

The following direct impacts to nesting birds may occur as a result of the development:

- Death or injury to adults or destruction of nests during vegetation clearance. However, such impacts can be avoided by timing works so that they occur outside of the nesting bird season

(September to February inclusive), and by adopting sensitive working practices as detailed in Section 4; and

- Permanent nesting habitat loss.

The following indirect impacts to nesting birds may occur as a result of the development:

- Habitat degradation; and
- Increases in disturbance levels.

Due to the permanent, large-scale habitat loss proposed for the site, adequate on-site compensation for nesting birds may be difficult to achieve. A breeding bird survey will be required to fully determine the impacts on nesting species.

3.5.3. Bats

Desk Study Results

SEWBRc did not return any bat roosts within 1km of the survey site. However, several species, namely; brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), noctule bat (*Nyctalus noctula*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) were recorded foraging and commuting within 1km of the site.

Field Survey Results and Evaluation of Ecological Value of Site for Bats

Trees

All of the trees within the survey area were assessed for their suitability to support roosting bats. The scattered broadleaved trees to the north-west of the site were semi-mature in age, most of which had moderate suitability to support roosting bats. The majority of the trees in the semi-natural broadleaved woodland were mature in nature, and also had moderate suitability to support roosting bats. The trees have been described in detail in the table overleaf, and numbered on Plan 5, which should be read in conjunction with this section of the report.

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Table 6: Trees Assessed for Bat Potential

Tree ID #	Tree Species	Age	Stems	Stem Diam (mm)	Cat	Height + (Lower Branch Height)	Nrth	Est	Sth	Wst	Phys Cond	Struc Cond	Est. Remain Contrib	Comments	Preliminary Management Recommendations	Work Priority	RPR (m)	RPA(m2)	Suitability for Rooting Bats
G1	Acer pseudoplatanus (Sycamore), Quercus petraea (Sessile Oak), Fraxinus excelsior (Ash), Salix caprea (Goat Willow)	EM	1	450	B2	10(0)	5	5	5	5	F	F	20+	low B category. Group of mainly sprawling regeneration with mainly early mature and mature sycamores trees, some ash showing signs of ash dieback disease. Only a few trees within the group have PRFs present.			5.4	91.62	Low
G2	Acer pseudoplatanus (Sycamore)	M	4	700	C2	14(0)	8	8	8	8	G/F	F	10+	high C category. Group of mainly multistemmed sycamore trees, possibly regrowth from old, coppiced tree, as a whole of fair form, individual stems upright inform. No PRFs or evidence of bats recorded.			8.4	221.7	Nil
G3	Salix caprea (Goat Willow)	M	3	346	C2	8(0)	5	5	5	5	F	F	10+	low C category. Fast growing species prone to stem and branch failure, regrowth likely from high coppice stump, some stem failures noted. No PRFs or evidence of bats recorded.			4.15	54.11	Nil
G4	Acer pseudoplatanus (Sycamore)	M	3	606	C2	14(0)	7	7	7	7	G/F	F	10+	high C category. Group of mainly multistemmed sycamore trees, possibly regrowth from old, coppiced tree, as a whole of fair form Multiple PRF's present on multiple trees in the group, including cavities and flaking bark.			7.27	166.1	Moderate
G5	Acer pseudoplatanus (Sycamore)	SM	3	260	C2	8(0)	3	3	3	3	F	F	10+	low C category. Group of slender multistemmed trees, likely to be regrowth from past coppicing No PRFs or evidence of bats recorded.			3.12	30.59	Nil
G6	Acer pseudoplatanus (Sycamore), Quercus petraea (Sessile Oak)	M	1	600	B2	16(0)	8	8	8	8	G/F	F	20+	low B category. Group of mainly multistemmed sycamore trees, as a whole of fair form forming a larger group with other off-site trees, some branches cut back from electrical lines Multiple trees with PRFs present, including flaking bark, missing limbs and cavities.			7.2	162.9	Moderate
G7	Acer pseudoplatanus (Sycamore), Salix caprea (Goat Willow), Quercus petraea (Sessile Oak), X Cupressocyparis leylandii (Leyland Cyp)	EM	1	350	C2	11(0)	5	5	5	5	F	F	10+	Sprawling area of mainly scrub and slender multistemmed trees, row of unmanaged Leylandii noted along south boundary of group Multiple trees with PRFs present, including the goat willow which has lots of flaking bark present.			4.2	55.42	Moderate
T1	Sorbus intermedia (Swedish Whitebeam)	M	1	470	B2	7(2.5)	5	4	4	5	G/F	G/F	20+	Tree of fair to good form and health, forms group with other landscape planted trees. No PRFs or evidence of bats recorded.			5.64	99.95	Nil

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Tree ID #	Tree Species	Age	Stems	Stem Diam (mm)	Cat	Height + (Lower Branch Height)	Nrth	Est	Sth	Wst	Phys Cond	Struc Cond	Est. Remain Contrib	Comments	Preliminary Management Recommendations	Work Priority	RPR (m)	RPA(m2)	Suitability for Roosting Bats
T3	Sorbus intermedia (Swedish Whitebeam)	M	1	550	B2	7(2.5)	5	5	5	4	G/F	G/F	20+	tree of fair to good form and health, some dead /declining branches noted in crown, forms group with other landscape planted trees. A deep, 15cm cavity is present in the trunk, located 125cm from the ground. It is suitable for use by roosting bats.	prune out dead and declining branches to healthy growth points	H/M	6.6	136.9	Moderate
T4	Sorbus intermedia (Swedish Whitebeam)	M	1	590	B2	7(2.5)	5	5	4	5	F	G/F	20+	Tree of fair to good form and fair health, some dead /declining branches noted in crown, forms group with other landscape planted trees, two old desiccated fungal brackets noted at base (poss. Meripilus giganteus). Flaking bark is present on some of the limbs, however, this is not suitable for roosting bats. The tree is very large, and some limbs were not able to be closely inspected which may have PRFs.	prune out dead and declining branches to healthy growth point	H/M	7.08	157.5	Low
T5	Sorbus intermedia (Swedish Whitebeam)	M	1	580	B2	7(2)	5	4	5	4	G/F	G/F	20+	Tree of fair to good form and health, some dead /declining branches noted in crown, forms group with other landscape planted trees. Has some broken limbs with cavities which can be utilised by roosting bats. There is also a 2cm cavity, which extends approximately 5cm into the tree.	prune out dead and declining branches to health growth points	H/M	6.96	152.2	Moderate
T6	Sorbus intermedia (Swedish Whitebeam)	M	1	570	B2	7(2)	4	4	5	5	G/F	G/F	20+	Tree of fair to good form and health, some dead /declining branches noted in crown, forms group with other landscape planted trees. Broken limbs are present, with many providing cavities into the tree which could be utilized by roosting bats. There is also a large cavity (31cm in length), approximately 95cm from the ground.	prune out dead and declining branches to healthy growth points	H/M	6.84	147	Moderate

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Tree ID #	Tree Species	Age	Stems	Stem Diam (mm)	Cat	Height + (Lower Branch Height)	Nrth	Est	Sth	Wst	Phys Cond	Struc Cond	Est. Remain Contrib	Comments	Preliminary Management Recommendations	Work Priority	RPR (m)	RPA(m2)	Suitability for Rooting Bats
T7	Sorbus intermedia (Swedish Whitebeam)	M	1	570	C2	7(2.5)	5	5	5	5	F	F/P	10+	low C category. Tree of fair form, leaf bud cover fair, some dead /declining branches noted in crown, forms group with other landscape planted trees, strip of exposed internal decay with ganoderma fungal bracket noted on internal decay, forming reactive growth, trunk dysfunction noted on southern side of trunk with some reactive growth noted and emerging Ganoderma bracket, tree with a likely limited future. A large, shallow cavity extends upwards 157cm from the base of the tree. At the bottom of the tree, there is also lifted bark which can also be utilized by roosting bats.	prune out dead and declining branches to healthy growth points	H/M	6.84	147	High
T8	Sorbus intermedia (Swedish Whitebeam)	M	1	440	C2	7(2.5)	4	3	3	3	F	F/P	10+	low C category. Tree of fair form, leaf bud cover fair, some dead /declining branches noted in crown, forms group with other landscape planted trees, ganoderma bracket noted between buttress, tree with a likely limited future. Multiple PRFs present, including flaking bark, broken limbs, and a small cavity.	prune out dead and declining branches to healthy growth points	H/M	5.28	87.59	Moderate
T9	Sorbus intermedia (Swedish Whitebeam)	M	1	620	B2	7(2)	5	5	4	5	G/F	G/F	20+	Tree of fair to good form and health, some dead /declining branches noted in crown, forms group with other landscape planted trees. Multiple PRFs recorded, including flaking bark and a 6cm wide cavity. Sparse ivy coverage is also present on the trunk.	prune out dead and declining branches to healthy growth points	H/M	7.44	173.9	Moderate
T10	Sorbus intermedia (Swedish Whitebeam)	M	4	500	B2	6(2)	4	4	4	5	G/F	G/F	20+	Multiple stems below 1.5m. Tree of fair to good form and health, some dead /declining branches noted in crown, forms group with other landscape planted trees. Flaking bark is present on most of the limbs of the tree. Multiple cracks present which could be utilised by roosting bats.	prune out dead and declining branches to healthy growth points	H/M	6	113.1	Moderate
T11	Quercus petraea (Sessile Oak)	EM	1	450	C2	11(3)	7	7	6	3	G/F	F	10+	Unbalanced crown shape. Branches cut back from adjacent low electrical lines. Large tree with flaking bark and broken limbs which provide crevices and cavities for roosting bats.			5.4	91.62	Moderate
T12	Quercus petraea (Sessile Oak)	SM	1	200	C2	5(1)	3	3	3	3	G/F	G/F	20+	Small tree with flaking bark.			2.4	18.1	Low

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Tree ID #	Tree Species	Age	Stems	Stem Diam (mm)	Cat	Height + (Lower Branch Height)	Nrth	Est	Sth	Wst	Phys Cond	Struc Cond	Est. Remain Contrib	Comments	Preliminary Management Recommendations	Work Priority	RPR (m)	RPA(m2)	Suitability for Rooting Bats
T13	Salix caprea (Goat Willow)	M	3	520	U	10(0)	6	5	0	5	F	F/P	<10	Multiple stems below 1.5m. Fast growing species prone to stem and branch failure, regrowth likely from high coppice stump Small tree with no visible PRFs			6.24	122.3	Nil
T14	Salix caprea (Goat Willow)	M	2	424	U	4(0)	5	4	4	4	F	F/P	<10	Multiple stems below 1.5m. Fast growing species prone to stem and branch failure, regrowth likely from high coppice stump Small tree with no visible PRFs.			5.09	81.4	Nil
T15	Salix caprea (Goat Willow)	M	3	520	U	5(0)	7	7	7	7	F	F/P	<10	Multiple stems below 1.5m. Fast growing species prone to stem and branch failure, regrowth likely from high coppice stump, multistemmed and collapsing in form typical for species Small tree with no visible PRFs.			6.24	122.3	Nil
T16	Quercus petraea (Sessile Oak)	EM	1	390	B2	8(1)	5	4	4	4	G/F	G/F	20+	Small tree, twin leader of fair to good form and health Has flaking bark present.			4.68	68.82	Low
T17	Salix caprea (Goat Willow)	M	2	283	U	5(0)	3	5	0	0	F/P	F/P	<10	Multiple stems below 1.5m. Suppressed growth from surrounding trees. Fast growing species prone to stem and branch failure, regrowth likely from high coppice stump Small tree with no visible PRFs.			3.4	36.32	Low
T18	Quercus petraea (Sessile Oak)	M	1	600	C2	11(5)	2	7	8	5	G/F	F	20+	low B category. Suppressed growth from surrounding trees. Tree that forms part of a rough group Large tree with few PRFs, including flaking bark and broken limbs.			7.2	162.9	Moderate
T19	Salix caprea (Goat Willow)	M	2	283	U	5(0)	3	0	3	5	F/P	F/P	<10	Multiple stems below 1.5m. Suppressed growth from surrounding trees. Fast growing species prone to stem and branch failure, regrowth likely from high coppice stump Small tree with no visible PRFs			3.4	36.32	Nil
T20	Acer pseudoplatanus (Sycamore)	EM	1	400	C2	12(0)	5	5	3	1	G/F	F	10+	Suppressed growth from surrounding trees. Tree that forms part of a rough group Small tree with PRFs recorded.			4.8	72.39	Low
T21	Quercus petraea (Sessile Oak)	EM	1	400	C2	12(0)	8	5	0	2	G/F	F	10+	Suppressed growth from surrounding trees. Tree that forms part of a rough group Has flaking bark present.			4.8	72.39	Low
T22	Quercus petraea (Sessile Oak)	EM	1	370	C2	12(0)	7	2	3	6	G/F	F	10+	Suppressed growth from surrounding trees. Tree that forms part of a rough group Has flaking bark present.			4.44	61.94	Low

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Photo 15: G1



Photo 16: G1



Photo 17: G2



Photo 18: G3



Photo 19: G4



Photo 20: G5



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Photo 21: G6



Photo 22: G7



Photo 23: T1 – T10



Photo 24: Cavity in T3



Photo 25: Cavities in T5 (Circled)



Photo 26: Cavities in T6 and T8 (Circled)



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Photo 27: Cavity in T7



Photo 28: T9



Photo 29: Flaking Bark on T10



Photo 30: T11



Photo 31: T12



Photo 32: T13



Building

The building on the site was assessed externally and internally for its suitability to support roosting bats, as set out in the table overleaf:

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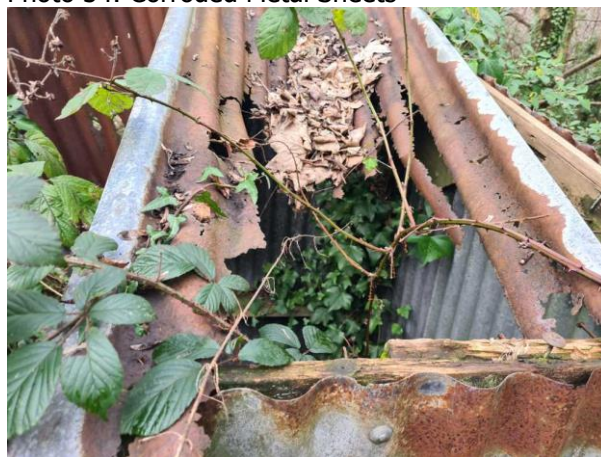
Table 7: Buildings Assessed for Bat Potential

Building Number	Description and PRF	Evidence of Bats	Roosting Potential	Hibernation Potential
B1	Building 1 is a single-storey shed composed of corrugated metal sheeting (Photos 1 & 2). It is dilapidated, and is missing large sections of the roof. It is largely open to the elements, and does not have any potential roosting features which could be utilised by bats.	N/A	Negligible	Negligible

Photo 33: Shed



Photo 34: Corroded Metal Sheets



Potential Building Roosts

B1 has been assessed as having negligible potential to support roosting bats given the lack of potential roosting features present.

Foraging and Commuting Habitat

The site supports dense semi-natural broadleaved woodland and scattered trees throughout the site, which are likely to provide good foraging habitat for bats. The wide footpath and woodland edges are also likely to provide good commuting routes for bats. Additionally, the broadleaved woodland to the west, beyond the proposed development area, provides ample foraging opportunities and contribute to linear habitat features that could be utilised by commuting bats.

Potential Tree Roosts

Tree T7 has been assessed as having high roost suitability.

Trees G4, G6, G7, T3, T5, T6, T8-T1 and T18 have been assessed as having moderate suitability to support bats.

Trees G1, T4, T12, T16, T17 and T20-T22 have been assessed as having low suitability to support bats.

Trees G2, G3, G5 and T1, T13-T15 and T19 have been assessed as having negligible suitability to support roosting bats.

Potential Foraging and Commuting Habitat

The habitats on site predominantly comprise of broadleaved woodland to the east and west, and an area of scattered trees to the north. Both provide structurally suitable habitats which bats can utilise for foraging, roosting and commuting. Additionally, the continuous broadleaved woodland to the west provides an ecological corridor to the river Afan, which is located approximately 0.1km to the west. Bats can utilise this for both foraging and commuting. As a result, the site is collectively considered to provide high quality foraging, commuting and roosting habitat for bats.

Impact Assessment of Proposed Development on Bats

The following direct impacts to bats may occur as a result of the development:

- It is likely that trees T11-22 and G2-G5 will be felled to facilitate the development. T11 and T18 have both been assessed as having moderate bat roost potential. Felling may therefore result in the death, injury, or disturbance to any bats present at the time of works, or the loss of roosts. Further survey will therefore be required to identify if any of these trees are being used as roosts, as detailed in Section 4; and
- The proposals will result in a large area of high-quality foraging and commuting habitat being lost, and these losses will be permanent in nature. Further survey will be required before the extent of the impacts on bats can be assessed, as detailed in Section 4.

The following indirect impacts to bats may occur as a result of the development:

- It is likely that trees in G7 and G6 will be retained. However, there is a risk that it may be subject to root damage as a result of heavy plant movement over the roost protection area, or accidental damage during general construction activities. G6 and G7 have been assessed as having moderate bat roost potential. Protective barriers will therefore be installed prior to any site work, to ensure that no such inadvertent impacts occur (see Section 4). These will be established in line with the tree root protection zones detailed in the arboriculture report that has been produced for the site. If an adequate barrier cannot be established around G6 and G7, the trees will require further survey, as detailed in Section 4; and
- Due to the change of use of the site, increases in artificial lighting levels will be significant, both during the construction phase and the operational phase of the development. If this lighting envelops the retained trees of the site, it could adversely affect foraging and commuting bats.

3.5.4. Dormice

Desk Study Results

SEWBrEC did not return any published records of dormice from 1km of the site.

Field Survey Results

No evidence of dormice was recorded during the survey.

The semi-natural broadleaved woodland is structurally suitable for dormice. Several flowering and fruiting species known to form part of the dormice diet are present, including hawthorn, ivy, sycamore, bramble, holly and oak are present.

Evaluation of Ecological Value of Site for Dormice

The broadleaved woodland is structurally dense and is well connected to suitable habitats in the wider landscape, including the additional woodland to the west of the site. The scrub habitats also offer some limited potential for this species. Considering this, and the structurally suitable habitat for dormice present on site, the presence of dormice within the woodland and scrub habitats is deemed possible and cannot be ruled out completely.

Further survey will be required before the extent of the impacts on dormouse can be assessed, as detailed in Section 4.

Impact Assessment of Proposed Development on Dormice

The following direct impacts to dormice may occur as a result of the development:

- Death or injury to adults or destruction of nests during vegetation clearance. However, such impacts can be avoided by adopting sensitive working practices as detailed in Section 4; and
- Habitat loss/ direct disturbance.

The following indirect impacts to dormice may occur as a result of the development:

- Habitat fragmentation;
- Habitat degradation;
- Disturbance during construction – main impacts are noise, accidental damage etc.;
- Lighting, either during construction or operational phase;
- Human disturbance during operational phase; and
- Introduction of cats.

3.5.5. Great Crested Newt

Desk Study Results

SEWBRc did not return any records of GCN within 1km of the site. There are records of other amphibians, comprising one records of common frog.

Acer Ecology

Field Survey Results

No direct observation or evidence of great crested newt was recorded on site although a targeted survey was not undertaken for this species. In addition, the current survey was undertaken outside of the active season for GCN.

Ponds Within 500m of Site

There is one large pond approximately 0.2km to the north of the survey site. This is located within an area of semi-natural broadleaved woodland and is separated from the site by a main road and a housing development.

An HSI assessments of this pond is displayed in the table below. The location of the water bodies is shown in Plan 6.

Table 8: Pond 1 HSI Score

Pond Reference	Water Body 1
Distance and Direction from Site	0.2km north
SI1 Field location	0.5
SI2 Pond area	0.955
SI3 Pond drying	0.9
SI4 Water quality	0.67
SI5 Shade	1
SI6 Fowl	1
SI7 Fish	1
SI8 Ponds	0.1
SI9 Terrestrial habitat	1
SI10 Macrophytes	0.8
HSI SCORE:	0.6859
Pond Suitability:	Average

The results of the Habitat Suitability Index indicate Pond 1 has 'average' potential to support breeding GCN, as although it is a large pond with no fish or fowl, there are no ponds within 250m, and the pond lies within a marginal geographic area.

The River Afan also lies approximately 0.1km to the west of the site. However, fast-flowing rivers are considered a hard barrier to GCN migration, and therefore this river is not suitable for GCN.

Photo 35: Water Body 1



Photo 36: River Afan

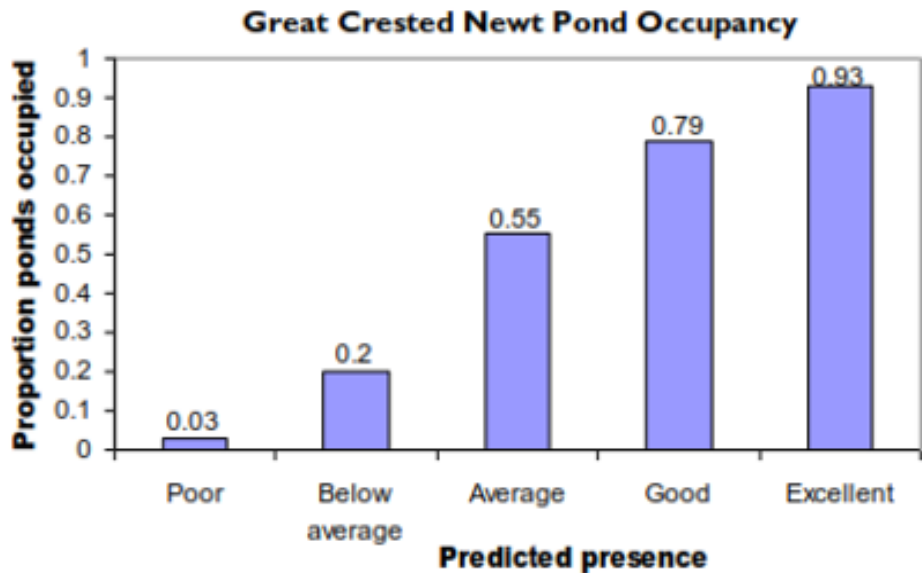


Terrestrial Habitats

The terrestrial habitats within the development footprint create a mosaic of optimal and sub-optimal habitats for GCN. The woodland understorey and scrub could be utilised for foraging and hibernating individuals. However, the hard standing and poor semi-improved grassland habitats provide little physical protection for this species and are considered to be wholly unsuitable.

Evaluation of Ecological Value of Site for Great Crested Newt

Water Body 1 scored 'Average' in the HSI assessment. The figure below (ARG, 2010) shows that the proportion of GCN presence in ponds that scored 'Average' is 0.55 or 55%.



However, Water Body 1 lies on the opposite side of both a road and a large housing development, which are both considered likely to comprise a hard barrier to GCN migration. Although the development site is connected to the waterbody via a strip of broadleaved deciduous woodland to the west, this increases the

total distance between the waterbody and the site, and if present, GCN would be anticipated to travel to approximately 400m.

As a general rule, suitable habitats within 250m of a breeding pond are likely to be used most frequently by GCN (English Nature 2001). When considered in addition to the lack of published records of this species within the study area, the likelihood of GCN migrating on to the proposed development site is considered unlikely, though it cannot be ruled out completely.

Impact Assessment of Proposed Development on Great Crested Newt

The presence of GCN within the site cannot be ruled out completely. However, with the limited number of ecologically optimal water bodies nearby, the close proximity of the fast-flowing river to the west, the development proposals will most likely not affect them. Precautionary measures have been detailed in Section 4 to reduce any impacts from the development proposal.

3.5.6. Otter

Desk Study Results

SEWBRc returned a total of two otter records within 1km of the site. The nearest record was made in 2014, approximately 1.3km away towards the west of the site.

Otters are known to be present on much of the River Afan (SEWBRc, 2021), approximately 0.1km to the west of the site, although there are no records in the immediate vicinity of the site itself.

Field Survey Results

No evidence of otter was identified from the River Afan; however, it remains highly likely that otters forage and commute along this watercourse, at least periodically. The banks of the watercourse are well vegetated and some exposed tree roots are present, which could potentially be used by otters as resting places (i.e. couches and holts).

The semi-natural broadleaved woodlands on the development site are structurally suitable to support commuting and foraging otters. They are connected to the River Afan by a strip of semi-natural broadleaved woodland to the north-west.

Evaluation of Ecological Value of Site for Otters

Evidence of otters was not found during the survey; however, their presence on the development site cannot be ruled out. Although there is a residential housing development which largely separates the site from the River Afan, it is still connected by a small strip of broadleaved woodland to the north-west of the site. This could potentially be used by commuting and foraging otters.

As a whole, the site is considered to be of site value to otters. It contains numerous features that offer suitable habitats for otters, but all these features are widespread in the surrounding landscape, particularly to the north-west of the site.

Impact Assessment of Proposed Development on Otter

Otters may be foraging or commuting across the site, so there is a chance of indirect impacts during the general construction phase. Precautionary measures have been detailed in Section 4 to ensure there are no adverse impacts.

3.5.7. Badgers

Desk Study Results

SEWBRc returned two badger records within 1km of the site. This included a live sighting some 0.3km to the west of the site in 2005, and a live sighting 0.4km to the south of the site in 2005.

Field Survey Results

No evidence of badgers was recorded during the survey.

Evaluation of Ecological Value of Site for Badgers

Although no evidence of badgers was recorded on site, the semi-natural broadleaved woodlands within the site provide some potential for badgers to forage, commute and build setts.

Impact Assessment of Proposed Development on Badgers

The likelihood of badgers' sett building on site is considered to be low, and therefore no adverse impacts to badger setts are subsequently anticipated. However, badgers are likely to be foraging or commuting across the site, so there is a chance of indirect impacts during the general construction phase. Precautionary measures have been detailed in Section 4 to ensure there are no adverse impacts.

3.5.8. Reptiles

Desk Study Results

SEWBRc returned three records of reptiles within 1km of the site. These included a record of slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), one common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) and one adder (*Vipera berus*).

Field Survey Results and Evaluation of Ecological Value of the Site for Reptiles

No evidence of reptiles was recorded during the survey. However, the field survey was completed in January, at a time when reptiles would be expected to be inactive.

The survey area contains a range of optimal and sub-optimal habitats for reptiles, as well as areas which are wholly unsuitable. Suitable habitats on site include the areas of open woodland, scrub and artificial refugia. The semi-improved grassland to the north-west is sub-optimal as it has a short sward height and is managed.

Impact Assessment of Proposed Development on Reptiles

The proposed works carries a high risk of inadvertently killing, injuring or disturbing reptiles. Therefore, further surveys are required to identify the presence or absence of reptile populations in the site before a firm assessment can be made on the potential impacts to this species group (see Section 4).

3.5.9. Other Mammals

Desk Study Results

SEWBRc returned one records of other mammals within 1km of the site, comprising an American mink (*Neovison vison*).

Field Survey Results

Multiple molehills (*Talpa europaea*) were present in the poor semi-improved grassland to the north of the site, and a rabbit hole (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) was recorded in the broadleaved woodlands to the east of the site.

Evaluation of Ecological Value of Site for Other Mammals

There are a range of habitats with varied vegetation within the site, including the semi-natural broadleaved woodlands, scrub and semi-improved grassland. It is therefore likely that a range of mammals are present on site, including hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*), shrews (*Sorex* sp.), foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), and mice (*Microtus/Myodes* sp.) etc., occurring either as resident species or whilst foraging and/or commuting.

Impact Assessment of Proposed Development on Other Mammals

The impact on potential hedgehog habitat on site is considered to be moderate, therefore the clearance of vegetation may result in the accidental killing or injury of hedgehogs. Mitigation measures to avoid such impacts are detailed in Section 4.

3.5.10. Invertebrates

Desk Study Results

SEWBRc returned a large number of notable invertebrate records from within the study area, comprising:

52 priority invertebrate species were recorded within 1km of the site, namely: beaded chestnut (*Agrochola lychnidis*), green-brindled crescent (*Allophyes oxyacanthae*), ear moth (*Amphipoea oculea*), mouse moth (*Amphipyra tragopoginis*), large nutmeg (*Apamea anceps*), dusky brocade (*Apamea remissa*), garden tiger (*Arctia caja*), sprawler (*Asteroscopus sphinx*), centre-barred sallow (*Atethmia centrago*), small pearl-bordered fritillary (*Boloria selene*), minor shoulder-knot (*Brachylomia viminalis*), mottled rustic (*Caradrina morpheus*), broom moth (*Ceramica pisi*), streak (*Chesias legatella*), latticed Heath (*Chiasmia clathrata*), dingy mocha (*Cyclophora pendularia*), brindled ochre (*Dasypolia templi*), small square-spot (*Diarsia rubi*), small phoenix (*Ecliptopera silaceata*), galium carpet (*Epirrhoegaliata*), autumnal rustic (*Eugnorisma*

glareosa), spinach (*Eulithis mellinata*), garden dart (*Euxoa nigricans*), double dart (*Graphiphora augur*), crescent (*Helotropha leucostigma*), ghost moth (*Hepialus humuli*), grayling (*Hipparchia semele*), rustic (*Hoplodrina blanda*), rosy rustic (*Hydraecia micacea*), wall (*Lasiommata megera*), shoulder-striped wainscot (*Leucania comma*), rosy minor (*Litologia literosa*), v-moth (*Macaria wauaria*), lackey (*Malacosoma neustria*), dot moth (*Melanchra persicariae*), black oil-beetle (*Meloe proscarabaeus*), oblique carpet (*Orthonama vittata*), powdered quaker (*Orthosia gracilis*), dark spinach (*Pelurga comitata*), argent & sable (*Rheumaptera hastata hastata*), large wainscot (*Rhizedra lutosa*), shaded broad-bar (*Scotopteryx chenopodiata*), white ermine (*Spilosoma lubricipeda*), buff ermine (*Spilosoma lutea*), anomalous (*Stilbia anomala*), hedge rustic (*Tholera cespitis*), blood-vein (*Timandra comae*), cinnabar (*Tyria jacobaeae*), dark-barred twin-spot carpet (*Xanthorhoe ferrugata*), neglected rustic (*Xestia castanea*) and sword-grass (*Xylena exsoleta*).

No invertebrate listed as species of conservation concern were recorded within 1km of the site.

20 invertebrate listed as locally important species were recorded within 1km of the site, namely: Portland moth (*Actebia praecox*), sand dart (*Agrotis ripae*), crescent dart (*Agrotis trux*), white-marked (*Cerastis leucographa*), dotted chestnut (*Conistra rubiginea*), wormwood (*Cucullia absinthii*), rosy marbled (*Elaphria venustula*), thyme pug (*Eupithecia distinctaria* subsp. *constrictata*), bleached pug (*Eupithecia expallidata*), marbled pug (*Eupithecia irriguata*), alder kitten (*Furcula bicuspis*), devon carpet (*Lampropteryx otregiata*), emerald damselfly (*Lestes sponsa*), shore wainscot (*Mythimna litoralis*), black-tailed skimmer (*Orthetrum cancellatum*), wood tiger (*Parasemia plantaginis plantaginis*), oblique striped (*Phibalapteryx virgata*), white colon (*Sideridis turbida*), great green bush cricket (*Tettigonia viridissima*) and blomer's rivulet (*Venusia blomeri*).

Field Survey Results

No incidental observations of invertebrates were recorded during the survey.

Evaluation of Ecological Value of Site for Invertebrates

Due to the habitats present it is assumed the site will support an assemblage of invertebrates but is unlikely to support notable or rare species.

Impact Assessment of Proposed Development on Invertebrates

The invertebrates using the site for habitat are unlikely to solely rely on the site for their continued survival. While some habitat loss will occur across the site, this can be more than offset by providing a range of new habitats within the development that will benefit invertebrates, Plans for widespread planting across the site have potential to greatly increase the floristic diversity of the site, therefore introducing more opportunity for a wider range of invertebrates to utilise the site post-development.

4. Recommendations and Conclusions

The following recommendations have been developed based on the development proposals available at the time of writing. It should be noted that they may be subject to change upon receipt of the final design. The implementation of these recommendations will ensure compliance with the Planning Policy Wales version 11 (Welsh Government, 2021)¹⁹, TAN 5 *Nature Conservation and Planning* (2009), Section 6 and 7 of the Environment Wales Act, 2016, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 which has been updated by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) [‘CHSAEU’] Regulations 2019 and the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan.

The recommendations aim to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the environment and protected species, mitigate and compensate for losses where damage is unavoidable and promote opportunities to enhance biodiversity. There is a requirement that developments must provide net benefit for biodiversity.

4.1. Further Work

Works will not commence until the surveys below have been carried out. Results from these surveys will inform and allow for targeted recommendations for the avoidance (timing of works), future mitigation and compensation measures required as part of the development.

Works should not commence until further surveys have been carried out to assess the potential impact to reptiles on site.

4.1.1. Bat Activity Surveys

Table 8.3 of the Bat Survey Guidelines (2023) states that habitats with ‘high suitability for bats’ should be subject to a transect and remote detector survey (see Appendix 8).

In high suitability sites, one survey visit should be undertaken per season (April to October) should be undertaken in appropriate weather conditions for bats.

In addition to a transect survey, high suitability sites should be subject to a remote/static detector survey at three locations per transect. Data should be collected on five consecutive nights per month (April to October) in appropriate weather conditions for bats.

In order for a transect to be completed, accessible pathways will need to be cleared in the scrub to the north and north-west of the site. Clearance of this scrub should be undertaken from September to February, outside the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive). Alternatively, any works undertaken from March to August will be subject to a check for nesting birds by a suitably qualified ecologist immediately prior to the works. If any active nests are found these will be protected, along with an appropriate buffer zone of approximately 10m, until the nesting is complete, and the young have fledged. Supervision of the

¹⁹ Planning authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions ... and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems. Development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity.

clearance works will be required by an ecologist to ensure that protected species such as dormice and badger are not affected by the works.

4.1.2. Bat Dusk Emergence Surveys

If any of the trees assessed as having high or moderate suitability for bats require felling or pruning, dusk emergence surveys will be required to fully assess the impact of the development on roosting bats. Table 6 details that pruning work is proposed on several trees with moderate or high suitability for supporting roosting bats.

Current best practice guidelines (Collins, 2023) state that two dusk emergence survey visits should be undertaken on trees with moderate roost suitability. Three dusk emergence surveys are required to confirm the likely absence on trees with high roost suitability.

The surveys should be undertaken from May to September, with at least one of the surveys between May and August, and will be supplemented with night vision aids. For trees with high roost suitability, it should be noted that if evidence of bats is found, roost characterisation can sometimes be achieved on the basis of two surveys.

4.1.3. Dormouse Surveys

A nest tube survey should be undertaken in order to determine the presence/ likely absence of dormice on site using the methodology outlined in The Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2nd Edition (Bright *et al.*, 2006).

Nest boxes will be positioned across the site's scrub and woodland at 10-20m intervals, as well as on adjoining suitable habitat. These will be monitored over the course of the survey season (April-November) to determine dormouse presence/ likely absence. It is recommended that nest tubes are checked once every month, as dormouse nests may degrade, especially when overtaken by wood mice, and can lose many of their unique characteristics.

Survey effort for dormice is based on the index of probability scoring system (Bright *et al.*, 2006), where different months have a different likelihood of dormice being detected. For example, 50 nest tubes installed in March and left in situ until the end of November would score 25 (the sum of probability index figures for each month) and 100 tubes for the same period would score 50, i.e. double the search effort (see Table 9 for details of the scoring system). Nest tubes are most frequently occupied in May, August and September and so these months score highest. At least 20 points need to be accrued to ensure sufficient survey effort has been undertaken to determine likely absence.

Table 9: Index of probability of finding dormice present in nest tubes throughout the year (Bright *et al.*, 2006).

Month	Index of Probability (50 Tubes)	Factor of 2 (100 tubes deployed)
April	1	2
May	4	8
June	2	4
July	2	4
August	5	10
September	7	14
October	2	4
November	2	4
		Total

Twenty points will be achieved in September if 50 nest tubes are deployed, or in August if 100 tubes are deployed.

4.1.4. Common Bird Census

An abbreviated Common Birds Census (CBC) is recommended in order to determine the number of breeding bird species and density of territories on site. This will provide a more accurate estimate of the level of impact the development will have on the bird populations on site, and inform appropriate mitigation and compensation methods.

An abbreviated CBC involves the mapping of breeding bird territories across three site visits (between sunrise and midday – two evening surveys may also be useful). The surveys should be spread between mid-March and mid-June, taking a route that goes within 50m of all areas of the site (closer in areas of denser vegetation). The routes and directions should vary between visits.

4.1.5. Reptile Surveys

Surveys to determine the presence/likely absence of reptiles should be carried out between April and September—ideally in the months of April, May, June or September (Natural England Technical Information Note TIN1021). In this site, surveys will be undertaken between April and June.

The survey will follow the advice provided by the Herpetofauna Workers' Manual (Gent and Gibson, 2003), and comprise a 'direct search' and the monitoring of artificial and naturally occurring refugia placed in areas of the site assessed as being most attractive to reptiles (e.g. longer grass, scrub margins etc.).

A variety of different types of refugia should be used. Refugia will comprise primarily squares of roofing felt, carpet tiles and/ or corrugated metal tins of varying sizes but mainly 60 x 60cm. Naturally occurring refugia including discarded logs, timber and large rocks etc. will also be checked. Where possible, artificial refugia should be laid in south-facing positions in areas deemed least likely to be tampered with. Refugia

will be left undisturbed on site for two weeks, prior to commencement of the survey to allow the reptiles on the site sufficient time to find and start utilising them. The refugia will then be checked on at least seven separate occasions, non-consecutively, in suitable weather conditions (warm, overcast periods with low wind speeds) in order to record any reptile species beneath or basking upon them. As a guideline, it is recommended that the optimal time to survey reptiles is between 08:30 and 11:00 or 16:30 and 19:00, and when the air temperature is between 9°C and 18°C (Froglife, 1999). Heavy rain and wind are deemed unsuitable for surveying reptiles (Froglife, 1999). Ideally, the survey will be spread out across the survey season.

The survey results will determine whether reptiles are present on the site, and if so, will provide the basis for designing and implementing a reptile mitigation strategy prior to the start of the development. Depending on the population present it may be possible for individuals to be encouraged to move offsite voluntarily via species deterrence measures and destructive searches.

4.2. Precautionary Measures

Full details of precautionary measures will be devised after completion of the further surveys detailed above.

4.2.1. Timing of Works for Birds

Current proposals suggest that the areas of dense scrub and woodland are intended to be cleared during works. Clearance of these habitats on site should be undertaken from September to February, outside the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive). Alternatively, any works undertaken from March to August will be subject to a check for nesting birds by a suitably qualified ecologist immediately prior to the works. If any active nests are found these will be protected, along with an appropriate buffer zone of approximately 10m, until the nesting is complete, and the young have fledged.

Measures may need to be taken to minimise the potential for causing the death and injury of individuals during site clearance, via the implementation of 'species deterrence' measures in the run-up to the commencement of works on-site, and 'destructive searches' of vegetation, where required. Full details of these measures will be devised after completion of the further surveys detailed above.

4.2.2. Precautionary Measures for Great Crested Newts

Mitigation for great crested newt should concentrate primarily on minimising the potential for causing the death and injury of individuals during site clearance and building operations. Contractors should check beneath potential refugia, such as large stones, logs and metal sheets etc, for great crested newts (and other fauna) as these are lifted. Any faunal species which are present should be allowed to vacate the works area unaffected, or should be carefully assisted in doing so.

In the event of great crested newt being encountered during any of the activities on site, then all works should stop immediately and the advice of an appropriately-qualified ecologist sought.

4.2.3. Soft Felling of Trees with Negligible Potential

Trees G2, G3, G5 and T1, T13-T15 and T19 have been assessed as having negligible suitability to support roosting bat due to an absence of potential roosting features.

Therefore these trees can be felled without constraint, provided the trees are cleared following recommendations below.

- Works to the tree will take place between October and February to coincide with the period of lowest bat activity and likelihood of bats being present. This timescale would also eliminate the risk of causing accidental harm to nesting birds;
- Tree surgeons undertaking felling works will be warned of the possible presence of roosting bats (and/or nesting birds), and of their protected status. It will be clearly understood that in the event of any bats (or occupied birds' nests) being found the contractor must halt works in the area surrounding the roost (i.e. at least 15m from the identified roost) and advice sought from Acer Ecology Ltd;
- Any hollow sections of any tree, or any limbs with cavities etc, will be severed above and below the cavity, taking care not to cut through any potential cavities or hollows, and lowered to the ground with minimal force using rope slings. This technique will be employed if the trees are subsequently found to have large cavities or split limbs;
- Any removed hollow sections which cannot be fully examined for bats will be removed to a shaded location and left undisturbed on the ground in a safe condition for 24 hours. This will allow any bats present to rouse themselves and fly off after nightfall. The sections will be positioned on the ground so that access to the cavities is unobstructed, but so that the cavities will not become filled with rainwater; and
- The services of an appropriately qualified and licensed bat consultant will be available on an 'on-call' basis at all stages of the works to deal with any unexpected encounters with bats or nesting birds.

4.2.4. Precautionary Measures for Otters

No direct mitigation is likely to be required; however, the following mitigation should be implemented in order to minimise disturbance:

- There will be no night-time working;
- All materials will be stored within a secure otter-proof fenced compound; and
- Any excavations will be covered overnight or where this is not possible, a means of escape will be provided; and
- An appropriately experienced ecologist will be "on call" for the duration of the project in the unlikely event that an otter or otters are found on site, in which case the relevant work will cease

immediately, 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.

4.2.5. Good Construction Practices for Mammals

In line with good practice, any open trenches and excavations associated with the development will either be closed at night, or a means of escape provided (e.g. a wide plank at no greater angle than 45°) to help any badgers, hedgehogs or other trapped animals escape.

4.3. Mitigation Measures

Full details of precautionary measures will be devised after completion of the further surveys detailed above and the finalisation of development proposals.

4.3.1. Protective Measures for Retained Habitats

To prevent accidental damage, the retained trees will be securely fenced-off with appropriate temporary fencing (e.g. Herras fencing), and treated in accordance with British Standard BS5837 (2012) Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations (See Appendix 9). This protective fencing will be established in line with the tree root protection zones, as detailed in the arboriculture report that has been produced for the site [ArbTS, 2020]. Where possible, any future developments will avoid felling of trees. This will help to maintain the ecological connectivity of the site, maintain its biodiversity value and reduce the potential requirements for further protected species surveys.

4.3.2. Eradication of Japanese Knotweed

Guidance should be sought from Natural Resources Wales or a Japanese knotweed specialist regarding the control of Japanese knotweed, in order to prevent further spreading. Measures should broadly follow advice given in the Environment Agency's²⁰ Japanese Knotweed Code of Practice (2013) which include:

- Preparing a method statement, detailing how Japanese knotweed will be managed on site;
- A specialist INNS (Invasive Non-Native Species) contractor will be commissioned to produce a method statement and management plan dealing with the on-site Japanese knotweed;
- Appointing an ecological clerk of works responsible for the management of Japanese knotweed on the site; and
- Ensuring that site workers are made aware of what the plant looks like via a toolbox talk and of the measures required of them as detailed within the site Japanese knotweed strategy.

The Japanese knotweed on site will need to be dealt with in an appropriate manner either by herbicide treatment or removal of the knotweed and soil from the site in a "dig and dump" method where the soil is then taken to an appropriate landfill site, or an appropriate method. An invasive species specialist should be employed to oversee management of Japanese knotweed on the site.

²⁰ English guidance is used because no equivalent Welsh guidance has been produced by Natural Resources Wales

4.3.3. Eradication of Snowberry

If the snowberry present on site is subject to removal, any topsoil or turf necessary for the development cannot be stored directly next to the invasive species, to avoid the invasive species being spread across the site. Contractors are required to ensure that any tools and machinery brought onto the site are thoroughly cleaned of soil and plant matter to prevent cross-contamination. The same cleaning process will be applied for machinery leaving the site.

4.4. Compensation and Enhancement Measures

Full details of compensation and enhancement measures will be devised after completion of the further surveys detailed above and the finalisation of development proposals.

4.4.1. Compensatory Woodland Planting / Management Plan for Retained Woodland

Compensatory woodland planting or the creation of a management plan for areas of the retained woodland should be considered if proposals to clear the woodland cannot be avoided.

Compensatory Woodland Planting

Any site proposed for woodland planting would need to be subject to an ecological survey to ensure that high quality habitats will not be lost during planting.

Planting Density

Coed Cymru's Basic Guide to Tree Planting (2017) recommends woodland spacing of around 1,600 trees per hectare (c2.5m spacing). Trees will not be planted in straight lines so that planting appears more natural.

Timing of Planting

Planting will be undertaken from November to March. Winter planting is recommended as at this time tree roots are dormant and cope best with being moved. Planting will not take place if the ground is frozen or waterlogged.

Planting Sizes and Tree Care

Most native trees are planted bare-rooted as 1 or 2 year old "transplants".

Plants should be stocky and sufficiently 'hardened' off to withstand local weather conditions.

The trees should be planted immediately (e.g. within a day or two of receiving them). If storage is necessary, the trees should be stored in a cool place out of the wind e.g. in a shed or garage) in the packaging from the nursery. If the trees needed to be stored for more than a couple of days 'heeling' them into a trench is recommended, although they should be stored in a trench for no more than a couple of weeks. The trench should be approximately a foot deep with sharp stones removed. The trees should be tightly tied in bundles to help prevent them drying out and then the trench re-filled keeping the tips of the trees clear of the soil. The trees should be 'heeled in' to eliminate air in the trench.

Acer Ecology

It is essential that the time that tree roots are not exposed to the air is minimised as wind will dry out the very fine hairs that the tree needs for survival. In the event that the roots have dried out they should be soaked in water.

Trees should be transported in a plastic bag, removing one at a time.

Tree Guards

Planted trees should be fitted with tree guards. 400mm biodegradable spiral rabbit guards should be used for the trees, as deer reside within the woodland. These will be supported by a 750mm stake or cane.

The following woody species will be planted using the frequency and number of plants specified. The trees will be 45-60cm high, bare rooted plants.

Species	% Frequency	Number of Plants	Size
Pedunculate oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	30%	128	45-60cm, 1+1, bare root
Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>)	20%	85	45-60cm, 1+1, bare root
Field Maple (<i>Acer campestre</i>)	20%	85	45-60cm, 1+1, bare root
Silver birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>)	10%	43	45-60cm, 1+1, bare root
Common hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>)	10%	42	45-60cm, 1+1, bare root
Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)	10%	42	45-60cm, 1+1, bare root
	Total	425	

Maintenance

Some weed control may be needed in the first two to three years using herbicides. Weeds will be removed up to 1m within 1m of the new trees. Weed control will need to continue until the trees have become established. Weed growth is likely to be greatest from April to June.

Additional watering may be necessary if the first two summers after planting, and possibly longer if there are sustained dry conditions. The slope is quite steep and so may dry out quite quickly.

Thinning

Thinning of the trees will be necessary in year 15 after the woodland has become established.

Thinning should be undertaken during October to March and outside of the bird nesting season.

Management Plan for Retained Woodland

The areas of retained woodland should be subject to a five-year management plan, and adequate resources should be made available to ensure the establishment and maintenance of any compensatory habitats for a minimum of five years post-development. This recommendation should be secured by planning condition.

4.5. Licensing

It has not been possible to determine whether a NRW European Protected Species mitigation licence with respect to bats will be required. This will be determined after the further targeted surveys detailed in Section 4 have been completed.

4.6. Longevity of Report

If development works do not begin within eighteen months to two years of the date of this report of this report, an update survey is likely to be required in accordance with guidance from NRW²¹ (CIEEM, 2019) and BS 42020:2013²², to determine if conditions have changed since those described in this report.

4.7. Conclusions

The full extent of ecological impacts and potential constraints of the proposed development cannot be fully determined, based on the results of the preliminary ecological appraisal survey alone. Further survey work will be required before such assessments can be comprehensively made, as detailed in Section 4.1.

At this stage, the site's ecological value is not considered to represent a fundamental in-principal constraint to the proposed development.

²¹ As set out in Point 5 of the NRW *Bat Surveys - Frequently Asked Questions* and Point 4 of the guidance included within the NRW European Protected Species Development Application Form.

²² As set out in Section 6.2.1, point 7 which states that ecological information should not normally be more than two/three years old, or as stipulated in good practice guidance).

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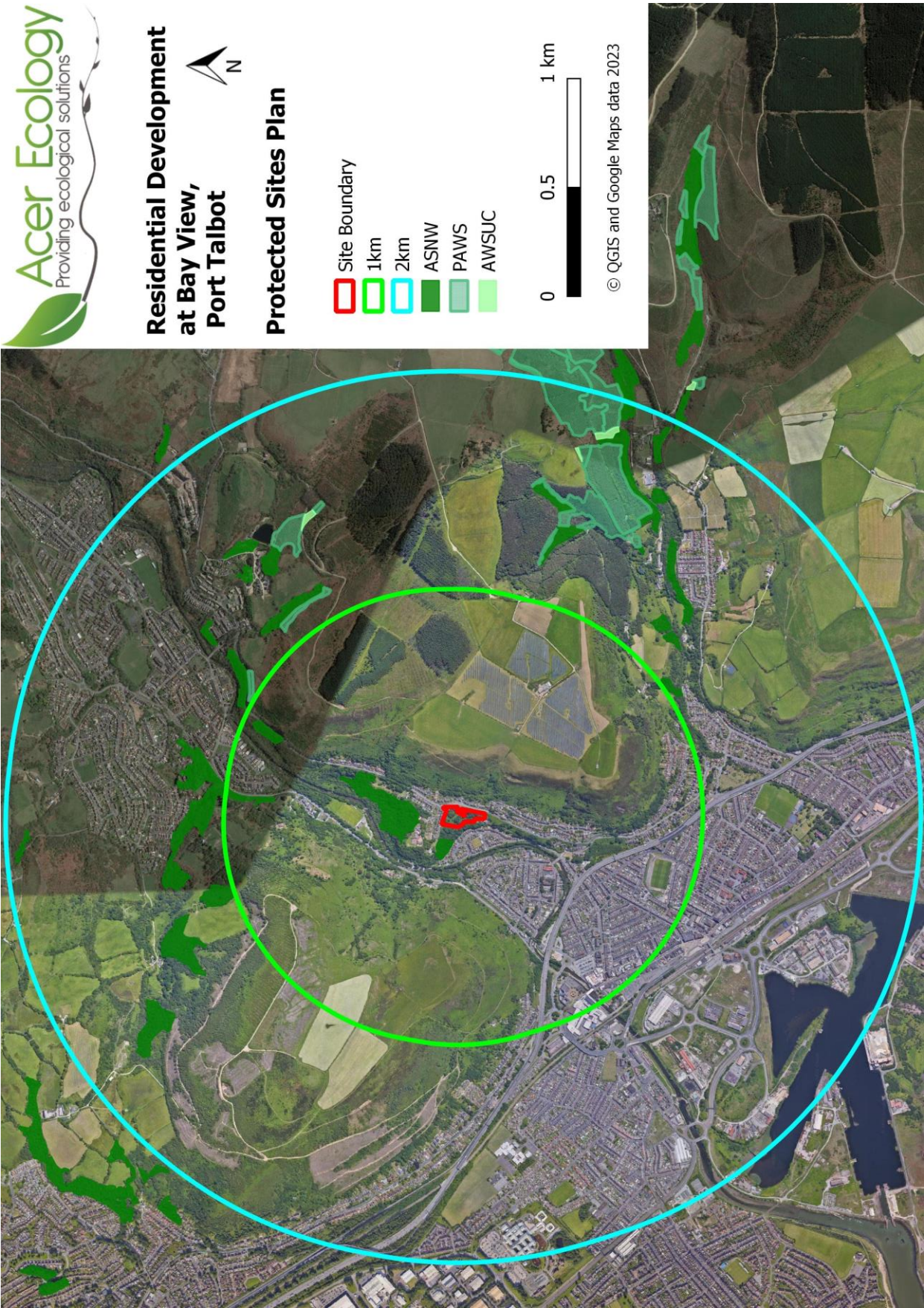
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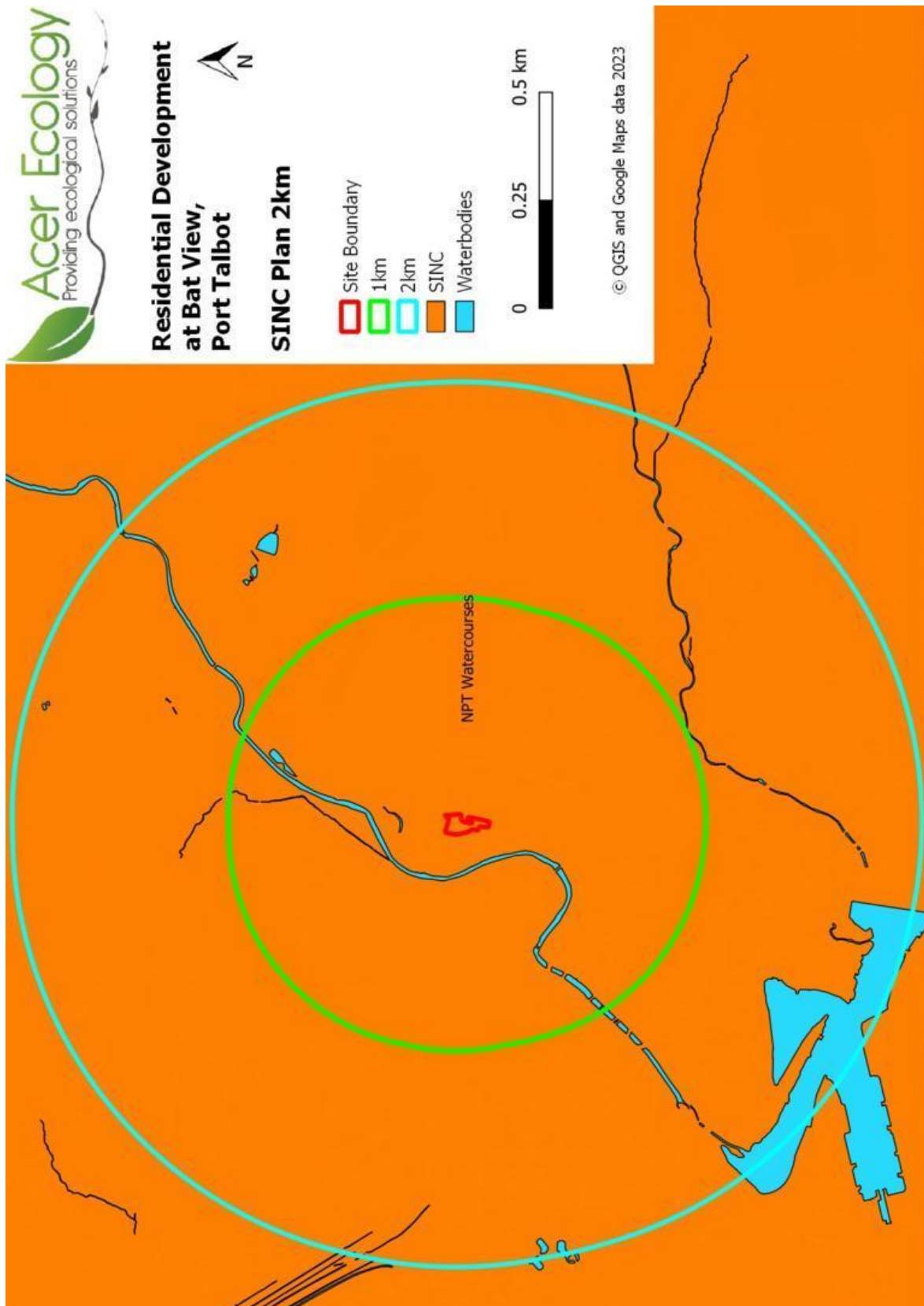
Plan 1: Site Location



Plan 2: Site Location and Protected Sites (2km Buffer)



Plan 3: Site Location and SINCS (0.5km Buffer)



Plan 4: Habitats and Vegetation



Plan 5: Tree Plan



Plan 6: Location of Water Bodies within 0.5km of Site



Appendix 1: Proposed Development Works



Appendix 2: Legislation and Policy Relating to Statutory and Non-Statutory Designated Sites and Planning Policy Relevant to Site

SINCS

SINCS are a class of nature conservation designations collectively referred to as 'Wildlife Sites'. Wildlife Sites are so-called 'third tier' sites, generally ranked below sites which are of international (first tier) or national (second tier) biodiversity significance, but which are considered to have '*substantive nature conservation value*' at the regional or district level. They are usually designated at the county or county borough level by the relevant local planning authority, and are recognised as a planning constraint in the relevant statutory development plan.

The framework for the identification and designation of 'Wildlife Sites' is set out in various Government documents, and is referred to in *Planning Policy Wales* (2021) and *Technical Advice Note (Wales) 5: Nature Conservation & Planning*. Defra published *Local Sites: Guidance on their identification, selection and management in 2006*²³.

Environment (Wales) Act 2016

The Environment (Wales) Act Section 6 duty, or the Biodiversity Duty, requires public authorities to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems. In fulfilling this duty, planning authorities must have regard to the list of habitats and species of principal importance for Wales, published under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The Section 6 duty requires that developments should not be permitted which result in net loss of value to biodiversity, and must seek to achieve biodiversity net gain. Where net loss cannot be achieved through avoidance or mitigation, compensation is required.

Future Wales - the National Plan 2040

Future Wales is the national development framework, setting the direction for development in Wales to 2040. It is a development plan with a strategy for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, achieving decarbonisation and climate-resilience, developing strong ecosystems and improving the health and well-being of our communities. Future Wales - the national plan 2040 is the national development framework and it is the highest tier plan, setting the direction for development in Wales to 2040. It is a framework which will be built on by Strategic Development Plans at a regional level and Local Development Plans. Planning decisions at every level of the planning system in Wales must be taken in accordance with the development plan as a whole.

²³

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20111108175609/http://archive.defra.gov.uk/rural/documents/protected/localsites.pdf>

National Planning Policy Wales (2021)

The primary objective of PPW is to ensure the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 11 - 24th Feb 2021 states that planning authorities must follow a stepwise approach to maintain and enhance biodiversity and build resilient ecological networks by ensuring that any adverse environmental effects are firstly avoided, then minimized, mitigated, and as a last resort compensated for; enhancement must be secured wherever possible. The first priority for planning authorities is to avoid damage to biodiversity and ecosystem functioning. Where there may be harmful environmental effects, planning authorities will need to be satisfied that any reasonable alternative sites that would result in less harm, no harm or gain have been fully considered.

Neath Port Talbot

Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan²⁴

Biodiversity net-gain policy is not specifically mentioned however policy EN 6 states that development must '*conserve and where possible enhance the natural heritage importance of the site or mitigation measures will need to be agreed*'. The Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2014) focuses to '*achieve no net loss of listed habit and species, and a gain in the (perceived or actual) extent / population of listed habitats and species*' (pg.15).

Relevant ecological policies include:

- SP15 Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- SP16 Environmental Protection
- EN7 Important Natural Features

Biodiversity Net Gain

Net benefit for biodiversity Planning Policy Wales (PPW) 11 sets out that "*planning authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. This means that development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity*" (para 6.4.5 refers). This policy and subsequent policies in Chapter 6 of PPW 11 respond to the Section 6 Duty of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

²⁴ https://www.npt.gov.uk/media/7321/ldp_written_statement_jan16.pdf?v=20170727124344

Appendix 3: Protected and Invasive Species Legislation Relevant to Site

Birds

All wild British birds (while nesting, building nests and sitting on eggs), their nests and eggs (with certain limited exceptions) are protected by law under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Included in this protection are all nests (at whatever stage of construction or use) and all dependent young until the nest is abandoned and the young have fledged and become independent. Particularly rare species such as barn owl (*Tyto alba*) are listed on Schedule 1 which gives them additional protection from disturbance whilst nest building, whilst near a nest with eggs or young, or from disturbing the dependent young.

Section 10.8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 state that Local authorities must use all reasonable endeavours to avoid any deterioration of habitats of wild birds.

Bats

All species of bats and their roosting sites are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 which continues to apply in UK law through the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) [‘CHSAEU’] Regulations 2019.

All species of UK bats are designated as ‘European protected species’. Seven species of bat (soprano pipistrelle, barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*), Bechstein’s (*Myotis bechsteini*), noctule, brown long-eared, lesser horseshoe (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) and greater horseshoe bats (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*)) are listed under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 as being of principal importance for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in Wales.

Great Crested Newt

GCN is a ‘European protected species’ afforded full protection under UK legislation. This protection extends to the habitats which support GCN and it is generally assumed that the species might be present in terrestrial habitats up to 0.5km²⁵ of a breeding pond, depending on habitat quality, connectivity and population size. The GCN newt is a priority species in Wales under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Dormice

Dormice are a ‘European protected species’ and afforded full protection under UK legislation. Dormice are listed under section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 as being of principal importance for maintaining

²⁵ Great Crested Newts have been recorded travelling long distances: 1.3km within a 7-week period by an immature individual GCN (Kupfer 1998, detailed in Jehle et al 2011); 250m in a study by Beebee and Griffiths (2000) and 120-360m in a study by Arntzen and Tenuis (1993). In addition, a study by Duff (1989) found that over half of a population overwintered in an area more than 120m away from the main breeding pond. However, long-distance movement of GCN is rare and most studies indicate that much shorter distances are typical (Jehle et al 2011). As a general rule, suitable habitats within 250m of a breeding pond are likely to be used most frequently (English Nature 2001).

and enhancing biodiversity in Wales. Since 2000, the UK population has declined by over a half (51%), decreasing on average by 3.8% per year (PTES, 2019).

Otters

Otters are a 'European Protected Species'. Their breeding sites or resting places²⁶ are fully protected under UK legislation. Otter is a priority species in Wales Under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Works affecting otter are subject to licensing procedures by NRW.

Badgers

Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Protection applies both to the animal itself and to its nesting burrows (setts), and current interpretation of the Act also confers some protection to key foraging areas.

Reptiles

With the exception of smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*) and sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) (which are afforded greater protection), common reptiles are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are given so-called 'partial protection', which prohibits the deliberate killing or injury of individuals. The habitats of common reptiles are not specifically protected. These species are listed as priority species in Wales under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs are listed as a Red List mammal species in Britain and are protected under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). They are "protected from being killed or taken by certain methods under Section 11(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The methods listed are: self-locking snares, bows, crossbows, explosives (other than ammunition for a firearm), or live decoys. The species listed are also protected from the following activities: trap, snare or net, electrical device for killing or stunning, poisonous, poisoned or stupefying substances or any other gas or smoke, automatic or semi-automatic weapon, device for illuminating a target or sighting device for night shooting, artificial light, mirror or other dazzling device, sound recording, and mechanically propelled vehicle in immediate pursuit. They are also listed as priority species under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The legislation afforded to hedgehogs in Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 means that every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity²⁷. In effect, 'conserving biodiversity' includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat.

²⁶ Resting places are defined as 'areas that are essential to sustain an animal or group of animals when they are not active' (Anon 2007).

²⁷ Biodiversity conservation in respect to hedgehogs is interpreted as a commitment to restoring or enhancing their population.

Japanese Knotweed

Japanese knotweed is listed under Schedule 9²⁸ of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), as amended. This act specifically prohibits the reckless or deliberate spreading of this species. Japanese knotweed will require eradication from the site.

²⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/schedule/9/part/II>

Acer Ecology

Appendix 4: Species Recorded

All species recorded by Acer Ecology, 2023

Taxonomic Name	Common Name	W	LM	CG	LDA	PMG	PIL	TF	Status
Trees and Shrubs									
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore								
<i>Quercus petraea</i>	Sessile Oak	X							
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly								
<i>Ligustrum ovalifolium</i>	Garden privet								
<i>Salix caprea</i>	Goat Willow								
<i>Sorbus intermedia</i>	Swedish Whitebeam								
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash								
<i>Malus domestica</i>	Apple								
<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	Cherry laurel								Alien
<i>Skimmia trivialis</i>	Japanese skimmia								Alien
<i>Bambusa vulgaris</i>	Bamboo								Alien
<i>Symphoricarpos</i> spp.	Snowberry								Alien
Herbaceous Plants									
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy								
<i>Polystichum setiferum</i>	Soft Shield-fern	X							
<i>Dryopteris dilatata</i>	Broad Buckler-fern								
<i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i>	Hart's-tongue Fern								
<i>Dryopteris affinis</i> agg.	Scaly Male-fern								
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble								
<i>Digitaria purpurea</i>	Foxglove								
<i>Pelargonium</i> spp.	Geranium								
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken								
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot								
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire Fog								
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red Fescue								
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup								
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg.	Dandelion								
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy								
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain								
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved Dock								
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Ragwort								
<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Common Cat's-ear								
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common Sorrel								
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow								
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass								
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Common Mouse-ear								
<i>Reynoutria japonica</i>	Japanese Knotweed								Alien
		2	0	0	0	0	0	0	

Acer Ecology

'Habitat Indicator Species' Totals (Wales Biodiversity Partnership 2008 ²⁹)	W	LM	CG	LDA	PMR	PIL	TF	
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Key to Indicator Species (Wales Biodiversity Partnership 2008³⁰)

W - Woodland, LM – Lowland meadow, CG - Calcareous Grassland, LDA – Lowland Dry Acid Grassland, PMR Purple moor-grass and rush pasture, PIL – Post Industrial Land, TF Species-rich Tillage Fields and Margins

SINC Selection

Sites which support one primary species or five contributory species; or habitats which support eight lowland meadow, eight calcareous grassland, seven lowland dry acid grassland, twelve purple moor-grass and rush pasture or eight tillage field and margins indicator species, should be considered for SINC selection. Post-industrial sites supporting 20 or more indicator species from the combined post-industrial land, acid, neutral, calcareous and marshy grassland lists should be also considered for selection.

WCA 5 – Species protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

²⁹ Wales Biodiversity Partnership (2008) Wildlife Sites Guidance Wales: A Guide to Develop Local Wildlife Systems in Wales. Wales Biodiversity Partnership/Welsh Assembly Government.

Appendix 5: Definitions of Site Value

International Value

Internationally designated or proposed sites such as Ramsar Sites, Special Protection Areas, Biosphere Reserves and Special Areas of Conservation, or non-designated sites meeting criteria for international designation. Sites supporting populations of internationally important species or habitats.

National Value

Nationally designated sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), or non-designated sites meeting SSSI selection criteria (NCC 1989), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) or Nature Conservancy Review (NCR) Grade 1 sites, viable areas of key habitats within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Sites supporting viable breeding populations of Red Data Book (RDB) species (excluding scarce species), or supplying critical elements of their habitat requirements.

Regional Value

Sites containing viable areas of threatened habitats listed in a regional Biodiversity Action Plan, comfortably exceeding Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) criteria, but not meeting SSSI selection criteria. Sites supporting regionally significant areas of BAP habitats or large and viable populations Nationally Scarce species, or those included in the Regional Biodiversity Action Plan on account of their rarity or supplying critical elements of their habitat requirements.

County Value/District Value

Site identified as a Site of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINC) at the district level; meeting South Wales Wildlife Sites Partnership (SWWSP) 2004 published designation criteria, but falling short of SSSI designation criteria, whether designated as a SINC or not. Ancient woodlands and sites supporting regionally significant areas of UK BAP habitat. Large scale examples of BAP habitats or areas supporting small populations of protected, UK BAP/ LBAP or threatened species (other than badger).

High Local

Habitats which just fail to meet Regional value criteria, but which appreciably enrich the ecological resource of the locality. Sites supporting species which are notable or uncommon in the county; or species which are uncommon, local or habitat-restricted nationally, and which might not otherwise be present in the area. Moderate scale examples of BAP habitats or areas supporting small populations of protected, UK BAP/LBAP or threatened species.

Local Value

Old hedges, woodlands, ponds, significant areas of species-rich grassland, small scale examples of BAP habitats or areas supporting small populations of protected, UK BAP/LBAP or threatened species. Undesignated sites or features which appreciably enrich the habitat resource in the context of their immediate surroundings, parish or neighbourhood (e.g. a species-rich hedgerow). Rare or uncommon species may occur but are not restricted to the site or critically dependent upon it for their survival in the area.

Site Value (within the immediate zone of influence)

Low-grade and widespread habitats. Woodland plantations, structured planting, small areas of species-rich grassland and other species-rich habitats not included in the UK or Local BAP.

Negligible

No apparent nature conservation value.

Appendix 6: Guidelines for Assessing Potential Suitability of Proposed Development Site for Bats³¹

Suitability	Description of Roosting Habitat	Commuting and Foraging Habitat
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/ underground levels).	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight-paths or by foraging bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection appropriate conditions ³² and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating bats). A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground ³³ .	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only) the assessments in this table are made irrespective of conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed.	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.	Continuous high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

³¹ Table 4.1 in Collins (2023)

³² For example, in terms of temperature, humidity, height above ground levels, light levels or levels of disturbance.

³³ This system of categorisation aligns with BS 8596:2015 Surveying for bats in trees and woodland (BSI, 2015).

Appendix 7: Bat Survey Protocol for Trees Affected by Arboricultural Work

The trees were assigned to the following categories:

Suitability	Description of Roosting Habitat	Commuting and Foraging Habitat
Negligible		Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting and foraging bats.
Low	A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground ³⁴ .	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	A tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only) the assessments in this table are made irrespective of conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed.	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	A tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.	Continuous high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

³⁴ This system of categorisation aligns with BS 8596:2015 Surveying for bats in trees and woodland (BSI, 2015).

Appendix 8: Recommended Number of Bat Activity Surveys to Achieve a Reasonable Survey Effort in Relation to Habitat Suitability (Collins, 2023)

Survey Type	Negligible Suitability Habitat for Bats	Low Suitability Habitat for Bats	Moderate Suitability Habitat for Bats	High Suitability Habitat for Bats
NBW	No survey required.	One survey visit per season (spring – April/May, summer – June/July/August, autumn – September/October). Further surveys may be required if these visits, or the results of static detector surveys, reveal activity of interest that requires more observation on site.		
AND				
Automated/ Static Bat Detector Surveys	None required.	Data to be collected for a minimum of five consecutive nights per season (spring – April/May, summer – June/July/August, autumn – September/October) in appropriate (or the best available) weather conditions for bats.	Data to be collected for a minimum of five consecutive nights per month (April – October) in appropriate (or the best available) weather conditions for bats.	

Appendix 9: Protective Fencing – Retained Habitats

