

Preliminary Ecological Assessment



Project: Princess Royal Theatre, Port Talbot

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1. Introduction

The client is seeking planning permission to undertake internal and external renovation work to the Princess Royal Theatre, Port Talbot. The theatre building sits in the eastern wing of a larger building. The remainder of the building extends to the west and is used as office space for Neath Port Talbot council workers. For completeness, the ecological assessment covers the entire building and adjacent grounds. The Royal Princess Theatre building is centred at SS 76556 90267.

As part of the planned works, a scheme of soft landscaping and visual improvements are proposed for an area of public open space to the south of the River Afan. The land proposed for improvement works is centred at SS 76504 90084 and extends north east and south west along the River Afan.

This report will assess the potential of the land within the site boundary to support habitats and species and the implications that any future development proposals could have on them.

1.1 Site Description

The Princess Royal Theatre building is located within the town of Port Talbot. The building sits approximately 50m away from the River Afan, separated by a tarmac car parking area. The public open space sits adjacent to the River Afan and encompasses a bridge over the river which allows vehicular access to adjacent shops and flats. Both parcels of land are considered to sit in an urban environment being immediately surrounded by commercial buildings and roads.

The town of Port Talbot extends to the east of west of the development areas. The town is dissected by River Afan which flows from north east to south west between the development areas. The M4 is present approximately 60m to the north of Princess Royal Theatre. A railway line runs along the south west boundary of the the public open space proposed for improvements.

1.2 Survey Constraints

The site visit was completed during March which is a sub optimal time of year to undertake habitat assessments. However, it was still possible to draw broad conclusions on habitat types within the site boundary.

The optimal time period to carry out ground-based visual assessments of trees for bat roosting potential is between December to March inclusive, when broad-leaved trees are devoid of leaves and features are more readily visible. It should be noted that ground based assessments are inherently constrained and potential roosting features present upon the skyward facing surfaces of limbs and branches will most likely be missed.

1.3 Surveyor Experience

Aislinn Harris is a full member of Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Aislinn is an ecologist with 14 years experience undertaking a wide range of flora and fauna surveys. All survey work is undertaken following JNCC Phase 1 Survey Guidelines and CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2nd Ed 2017). Aislinn is a licenced bat, great crested newt and dormouse ecologist with a wide variety of experience undertaking ecological surveys.

2. Desktop Study

A data search was undertaken via Aderyn (LERC Reference:0245-020) for the proposed development site and surrounding area. A 2km buffer zone was searched and records returned within 500m of site are noted below:

- Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)- closest record approximately 20m to the north of the Princess Royal Theatre building.
- Otter (*Lutra lutra*) - closest record approximately 40m away to the east of the Princess Royal Theatre building associated with the River Afan.
- Adder (*Vipera berus*) - closest record approximately 170m to the north of the Princess Royal Theatre building.
- Badger (*Meles meles*) - closest record approximately 460m to the north east of the Princess Royal Theatre building.
- Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) - closest record approximately 420m to the south east of the public open safe area.
- Birds: Species listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (WCA1.1) include - Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), Dartford Warbler (*Curruca undata*), Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*)
- Bird species listed under Section 7 (S7) of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (EWA 2016) include - Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*), Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)
- Adder (*Vipera berus*) - closest record approximately 170m to the north of the Princess Royal Theatre building.
- Invertebrate records listed under Section 7 (S7) of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (EWA 2016) include - Dusky Brocade (*Apamea remissa*), Grayling (*Hipparchia semele*), Cinnabar (*Tyria jacobaeae*), Buff Ermine (*Spilosoma lutea*)

Records of note returned for the rest of the 2km buffer zone are detailed below:

- Grass Snake (*Natrix natrix*)
- Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)
- Shrill carder bee (*Bombus sylvarum*), Wall (*Lasiommata megera*), Small Blue (*Cupido minimus*)
- Slow Worm (*Anguis fragilis*)

- Commuting / Foraging - Brown Long eared (*Plecotus auritus*), Myotis species (*Myotis sp*), Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*) and Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) bat.

2.1 Protected Sites

A data search for species records was undertaken for the proposed development site and surrounding area. The search also considered statutory and non-statutory protected sites.

Statutory Protected Sites

There are no statutory designated sites within 2km of the proposed development site.

Non-Statutory Protected Sites

There are seven Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) within 2km of the site. Both parcels of land within the development site appear to sit within the NPT Watercourses SINC designation. Other SINC sites in the 2km search area and an approximate distance at their closest point from the site are listed below:

- NPT Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (810m)
- HARBOURSIDE LAW COURTS (660m)
- LOWER RIVER AFAN ESTUARY (1.3km)
- BRYN GOYTRE CYCLEWAY (1.5km)
- LITTLE WARREN (1.9km)
- PANASONIC (1.7km)

There are 16 areas of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) within 2km of the site. These woodlands have been identified as Priority Areas by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) as they comprise mostly broadleaved native trees and shrubs believed to have been in existence for over 400 years. The nearest such woodland lies approximately 810m away for the north east of the Princess Royal Theatre building.

There are two areas of Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site within 2km of the site. These are sites which are believed to have been continuously wooded for over 400 years. They have been replanted with native or non-native species, most commonly with conifers. They currently have a canopy cover of more than 50% non-native conifer tree species. They will have varying levels of remnant features of ASNW. The nearest such area of woodland lies approximately 1.9km away to the east at its closest point.

There are two areas of NRW Priority Area (Woodland PAWS). NRW Priority habitat areas are large scale areas which were prioritised for targeted conservation work, based on factors including the habitats within them. The nearest such area of woodland lies approximately 1.9km away to the east at its closest point.

A B-Lines designation lies approximately 410m to the south west of the public open space portion of the development site. B-Lines are non-statutory protected sites which aim to restore and create wildflower habitats forming stepping stones that link existing wildlife areas together creating a network of habitats across the landscape benefiting not only pollinators but a host of other wildlife.

2.2 Potential Impacts to Protected Sites

The development proposals are unlikely to have any direct impact on any protected site within the local area. However the works will be undertaken in close proximity to the River Afan and secondary impacts via surface water run off or spillages into the river could be experienced. A suitable SUDS plan for the development site is recommended which demonstrates no or limited discharge into the River Afan.

3. Phase 1 Survey

3.1 Habitats

A walkover survey of the site was completed on the **27th March 2024**. All areas of the site were accessible. A species list can be found in Appendix 1, photographs of the site can be found in Appendix 2 and a map of the habitats found within the site is provided in Appendix 3.

Princess Royal Theatre

The majority of the parcel of land to the north of the River Afan comprises the Princess Royal Theatre and Civic Centre **Building**. The building is described within Table 1 in section 3.4 of this report. Immediately to the east and north east of the building are **tarmac car parking** areas. Immediately to the south of the building is an area of **paved hardstanding** with a **water fountain** in the centre and raised ornamental shrub planters.

To the west and north of the building are areas of mown **semi improved grassland**. The sward was well mown at the time of the site visit making identification of species difficult, however daisy, dandelion, common mouse ear, a species of clover and annual meadow grass were observed. The grassland is dissected by tarmac footpath allowing pedestrian access around the building. Small areas of **ornamental shrub** and **scattered tree** planting are present around the building and grounds. Species identification of the shrubs and trees was not possible as they are non native species.

Public Open Space

This parcel of land is located to the south of the River Afan. The south west edge of the site is a **tarmac road** which spans the River Afan and runs to the south of the commercial B&M store. Hard landscaping areas comprise of **paved footpaths**, street lighting, public benches and bins and metal railings along the River Afan. Soft landscaping areas are mainly areas of well mown **semi improved grassland**, ornamental **scattered trees** and stands of ornamental shrub planting. The species observed include daisy, dandelion, common mouse ear, a species of clover and annual meadow grass.

3.2 Great Crested Newts

Great Crested Newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are a European protected species and are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In summary, they are protected from:

- Deliberate capture, killing and injuring,

- Deliberate disturbance of a breeding site or resting place,
- Deliberate taking or destroying of eggs,
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place.

Great Crested Newts (GCN) are listed on schedule 5 of The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 which protects them from intentional or reckless disturbance or obstruction when using a structure or place for shelter and / or protection. It is also an offence to sell, offer or expose for sale a Great Crested Newt. Great Crested Newt and Common Toad are listed in section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which makes them key species to sustain and improve biodiversity.

There are no records for the presence of GCN within 2km of the development site.

There are no ponds within the site itself and there doesn't appear to be any within 500m of the development site. Whilst there is a water feature within the development site boundary, the fountain is raised from ground level by brick walls too approximately 1.5m in height making it inaccessible. However garden ponds in surrounding residential properties which are not visible on aerial images may be present.

Both parcels of the development site have limited potential to be used by amphibians such as GCN during their terrestrial life stages. The buildings and hardstanding areas provide no cover or foraging habitat for use by GCN. The grassland could be used by commuting animals but it is short providing very limited cover from predation. All areas of the site are in frequent use and subject to regular human disturbance further lowering the potential of such species to be present.

GCN generally like to have a necklace of suitable waterbodies for breeding purposes within a local area. Given the lack of ponds within the locale, limited suitable habitat on site and poor habitat connectivity from site to surrounding habitat it is considered unlikely that GCN are present within the development site. **No further survey recommendations are made for this species.**

3.3 [Dormouse](#)

The Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) is a European protected species and is protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In summary, they are protected from:

- Deliberate capture, killing and injuring,
- Deliberate disturbance of a breeding site or resting place,
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place.

Dormouse is listed on schedule 5 of The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 which protects them from intentional or reckless disturbance or obstruction when using a structure or place for shelter and / or protection. It is also an offence to sell, offer or expose for sale a native dormouse. Dormouse is listed in section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which makes them a key species to sustain and improve biodiversity.

There is a single record for the presence of dormouse approximately 980m to the north of the theatre building.

The vast majority of habitat within both parcels of the development site are unsuitable for use by dormouse. The building, hardstanding areas, car parking, footpaths, shrub planting and grassland provide no suitable foraging habitat or shelter from predation. The scattered trees across the site have no habitat connectivity to any areas of vegetation suitable for use by dormouse. Given the limited suitability of habitats within the site boundary, poor habitat connectivity to the wider landscape and limited impacts of the proposed development on woody habitat within the site boundary the presence of dormouse within the site boundary is considered highly unlikely. **No further survey recommendations are made for this species.**

3.4 [Bats](#)

All British bats are a European protected species and are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In summary, they are protected from:

- Deliberate capture, killing and injuring,
- Deliberate disturbance of a breeding site or resting place,
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place.

Schedule 5 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) also protects all species of British bat and their roosting locations. British bats are protected from intentional or reckless disturbance and or obstruction of their roosting places. Barbastelle, Bechstein, Noctule, Brown Long-eared, Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Greater Horseshoe and Lesser Horseshoe Bats are also listed in section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which makes them a key species to sustain and improve biodiversity.

There are a limited number of bat records available within the search area. The closest bat record is approximately 420m to the south east and for foraging and commuting Common Pipistrelle. All records within 1km of the development site are foraging and commuting records for Noctule, Myotis species, Common and Soprano Pipistrelle bats. The closest roost record is for a Common Pipistrelle maternity roost to be approximately 1.3km away for the southern portion of the development site.

Building Assessment

The building within the northern portion of the development site was subject to an external inspection which was undertaken following the guidance within the BCT Good Practice Guidelines 2023 (4th Edition).

An external assessment of the buildings was undertaken by Aislinn Harris, a NRW licenced bat worker (Licence No. S092780-02) on 27th March 2024. An internal survey of the buildings was not undertaken as the building was in use and suspended ceilings are present which obscured attic spaces. Photographs of the building can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

The building is brick built, three storey high and roughly 'C' shaped. Windows are present on all three floors along the majority of the building. No glazing is present on the very north east corner of the building, thought to be inline with the theatre section of the building.

The roof of the building is lined with slate roof tiles and the roof structure appears to have a mansard style roof where the roof tiles extend a small distance down the walls. Roof lights were visible in some lower sections of the roof. A wooden soffit boards appears to be visible around the entire perimeter of the building at eaves level.

In general the roof around the entire building appears to be in good conditions. An occasionally slightly raised tile was noted across the roof. One section of soffit was missing on the very north east corner of the building. However around the entire building slots are present within the soffits between the board and the wall approximately every 2m. The slots are most likely present for ventilation of the roof system. They were subject to a visual inspection using binoculars and no mesh or blockage of the gap was visible. Given the potential roosting features within the building and proximity of the building to the River Afan, which provides excellent habitat connectivity into the wider landscape, **the building is assessed as having moderate potential for bat roosting use. As such two bat activity surveys will be required on the building as detailed in Section 4 Recommendations and Mitigation of this report.** The activity surveys will be focused around the entire building as a the exact scale and impacts of work are not yet known.

Tree Assessment

Trees within the site were subject to a cursory ground level assessment for the potential presence for roosting bats. The optimum time for such surveys is during the winter months when trees have lost their foliage. Should any tree be considered likely to have above low potential for roosting use, further detailed survey work will be recommended following the ground based visual assessment methodology provided in the BCT Survey Guidelines 2023 (4th Ed).

No visible gaps or cracks suitable for use by bats were noted in the majority of the mature trees during the site visit. Visibility around the trees and up into the canopy was good as the survey was undertaken in March when no leaves are on the trees and access around all areas of each tree was possible. **No further survey work in relation to bats is required on any of the trees within the site.**

3.5 Otters

The Otter (*Lutra lutra*) is a European protected species and is protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In summary, they are protected from:

- Deliberate capture, killing and injuring,
- Deliberate disturbance of a breeding site or resting place,
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place.

Otter are listed on schedule 5 of The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 which protects them from intentional or reckless disturbance or obstruction when using a structure or place for shelter and / or protection. It is also an offence to sell, offer or expose for sale an otter. Otter is listed in section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which makes them a key species to sustain and improve biodiversity.

There are a small number of records of otter returned with 2km of the site. The closest record is for field signs of otter along the River Afan approximately 40m away from the Princess Royal Theatre building. The majority of records returned are associated with road traffic collisions along the M4 corridor to the north.

Otters tend to prefer secluded locations for their holts to help prevent them being disturbed by other animals. It is accepted that otters can travel long distances from river corridors to find acceptable holt sites.

The buildings, hardstanding and grassland areas do not provide any cover suitable for use by otter. Both areas of the development site are subject to high levels of human disturbance reducing the likely presence of otter. However otter are considered highly likely to commute along the River Afan. The river sits within a man made concrete lined channel approximately 3m below ground level. The presence of otter within the site boundary is considered highly unlikely. **No further survey recommendations are made for this species.**

3.6 Badger

Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. In summary they are protected from:

- Taking, killing or injuring;
- Cruelty;
- Interfering with a badger sett;
- The selling and possession of badgers;
- Marking or ringing.

Badgers are also listed on schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended.

Badgers tend to have a variety of setts with different uses and functions within the territory for the family unit. In general there is usually a main sett which the family will use the most. There are then annex, subsidiary and or outlier setts which depending on family structures and environmental pressures may be used at different times of the year. As female Badgers tend to have their cubs over winter the disturbance and damage of badger setts is prohibited between December and June inclusive. NRW are the licensing body for any actions which may contravene the above legislation.

There are a small number of records for the presence of Badger within 2km of the development site. The closest record is approximately 460m away to the north east of the site and is for a live sighting. The majority of records returned are associated with road traffic collisions along the M4 corridor to the north west.

Badgers favour a dry sloping site for digging their setts preferably within woodland or even under a large hedgerow bank. Badgers are creatures of habit and tend to follow regular pathways between their setts and foraging grounds. No evidence of the presence of badger such as hairs snagged on fencing, latrine, digging or evidence of regular pathways was found within the proposed development site. The site is flat, subject to high levels of human disturbance and is considered unsuitable for use by badger for sett digging.

The presence of a badger sett within the site boundary is considered to be highly unlikely. Given the high levels of human disturbance within all areas of the site the presence of badger, at least on occasion for commuting purposes, is considered highly unlikely. **No further survey recommendations are made for this species.**

3.7 Birds

All breeding birds are protected under schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended. Under this Act it is an offence to:

- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.

- Intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

Enhanced protection is afforded to species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act, this additional protection makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

The building, ornamental shrubs and scattered trees around the site are considered suitable for use nesting birds. The grassland areas are also suitable for foraging use by common local bird species.

The development proposals are likely to impact on a small number of scattered trees and the areas of building proposed for extension. **A precautionary approach to the removal of habitat with bird nesting potential will be required. Compensation measures for the loss of bird foraging and nesting habitat will be required.**

3.8 Reptiles and Amphibians

Reptiles such as the Slow-worm, Common Lizard, Adder and Grass Snake are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981(as amended). They are protected from killing, injuring and sale. They are protected from killing, injuring and sale. They are also listed in section 6 of The Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The four widespread species of amphibian i.e. the Smooth and Palmate Newts, Common Frog and Common Toad, are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) by Section 9(5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This section prohibits sale of these species. Common Toad is listed in Section 7 of The Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The closest amphibian record to site is for Common Frog approximately 1.3km east. The closest reptile record to site is approximately 170m to the north of the building and for Adder.

Reptiles prefer a mosaic of habitats with diverse vegetation structure creating open areas and nearby cover to provide protection from predators and the elements. Common amphibian species require still pools of water for breeding purposes and damp conditions with foraging habitat during their terrestrial life stages.

The grassland areas, ornamental planting and scattered trees within the site appear superficially suitable for foraging and commuting use by reptile and amphibian species. However the area is well used by the public on a daily basis and built up with roads, paving and buildings. Habitat connectivity to surrounding suitable habitat is considered to be very

limited further lowering the likelihood of reptiles or amphibians being present. On balance, the presence of reptiles and amphibians within the either parcel of land is considered to be unlikely. **No further survey recommendations are made for this species.**

3.9 Other Mammals

Records for mammal species listed under S7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 returned via the data search include Hedgehog (20m to the north), Harvest Mouse (1km to the south west), Brown Hare (1.2km to the north) and Water Vole (1.2km to the north).

Hedgehog is considered likely to be present within the site, at least on occasion. Hedgehog is considered to be a species of principal importance, for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in relation to Wales. As such consideration must be given to this species in any plans proposed for the site.

Brown Hare is considered unlikely to be present favouring grassland and arable land instead. Given the lack of local records and habitat connectivity to suitable habitat they are considered unlikely to be present.

Harvest Mouse is considered unlikely to be present due to the unsuitable habitat on site. Given the lack of local records and habitat connectivity to suitable habitat they are considered unlikely to be present.

Water Vole is considered unlikely to be present due to the unsuitable habitat on site. Given the lack of local records and habitat connectivity to suitable habitat they are considered unlikely to be present.

3.10 Invertebrates

Notable lepidopteran species records, those species that are listed under S7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, returned from the data trawl and include; Dusky Brocade (*Apamea remissa*), Grayling (*Hipparchia semele*), Cinnabar (*Tyria jacobaeae*), Buff Ermine (*Spilosoma lutea*), Shrill carder bee (*Bombus sylvarum*), Wall (*Lasiommata megera*) and Small Blue (*Cupido minimus*).

The habitats of the site were assessed for their potential to support invertebrates using the Invertebrate Habitat Potential Assessment (IHPA) as found in CIEEM inpractice Issue 112, June 2021. The IHPA protocol has been produced to allow ecologists without specialised entomological expertise to identify key habitats and features likely to support important invertebrate assemblages. Full details of habitat types can be found in Appendix 5.

Table 2- Invertebrate Habitat Assessment

Habitat Element	Grade
Decaying Wood – H1	E – Negligible/Absent
Rotational Management – H2	E – Negligible/Absent
Nectar Resources – H3	E – Negligible/Absent
Wet Substrates – H4	D - Minor
Other Water Habitats – H5	E – Negligible/Absent
Structural Patchwork – H6	E – Negligible/Absent
Still Air (S) – H7	D - Minor
Still Air (H) – H8	D - Minor
Connectivity – H9	E – Negligible/Absent
Ecoclines – H10	E – Negligible/Absent
Bare Earth – H11	E – Negligible/Absent

Based on the Invertebrate Habitat Potential Assessment (IHPA) the site, in its current state, is considered to have potential to support common and widespread generalist species of invertebrate only.

4. Recommendations and Mitigation

The client is seeking planning permission to undertake internal and external renovation work to the Princess Royal Theatre, Port Talbot. The theatre building sits in the eastern wing of a larger building. Proposals also include a scheme of soft landscaping and visual improvements are proposed for an area of public open space to the south of the River Afan. **Further survey work and consideration of the ecological mitigation and compensation that development of the site may require, is needed once detailed plans are known.**

It is anticipated that the majority of the habitats within the site boundary will be retained. Detailed design for the **renovation** work to the theatre building are not available at present but its likely the external work will affect the current fabric of the building and marginally increase the building footprint. There maybe an increase in lighting at site but the area is already subject to artificial light spill form street and security lighting.

The soft landscaping work in the southern parcel of land will likely seek to reconfigure the current areas of soft landscaping rather than create an overall habitat loss due to increased hard landscaping. Street lighting is already present along the footpath which sits adjacent to the river.

Once the development proposals are progressed and the considerations to ecology within the site are addressed, further ecological input will be required. Our general recommendations are:

- **Bat Activity Surveys on the building will be required.** Two bat activity surveys will need to be carried out and must follow the guidance within the BCT Good Practice Guidelines 2023 (4th Edition). Bat activity surveys must be carried out within the core maternity period, mid May to September, and must be at least one month apart.
- A root protection zone (RPZ) must be implemented around any retained trees which lie adjacent to or within the boundary of the proposed development site. British Standard BS 5837, *Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations* will be followed. Measures will include clear marking of the RPZ to guarantee no machinery is used or digging carried out in that area. This will ensure that there is no detrimental impact to the trees and the flora or fauna it supports.
- The trees and buildings within the site have potential for use by nesting birds. Any tree or building works must be completed outside of the bird nesting season of March to August inclusive. If this is not achievable an ecologist must inspect any vegetation with the potential for birds to be present for active birds' nests prior to removal works beginning. If an active nest is identified a buffer zone of at least 5m around the nest must be observed until the chicks have fledged. Only then can the

vegetation be removed. Greater buffer zones around nests may be required depending on the species and habitat the nest is within.

- Careful consideration must be given to the use of lighting within the development site, as this can adversely affect the activity of a variety of fauna, particularly foraging bats, nesting birds and invertebrates. Light spillage into adjacent semi-natural habitats must be avoided and brightness kept to the lowest permissible level in the areas adjacent to such habitats. All lighting must meet recommendations in the BCT Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night.
- It is recommended that street lighting adjacent to the River Afan is avoided, particularly with regards to the Public Open Space are to the south of the river. The boundary along the river in this area is a metal fence line which likely allows for a degree of light spill onto the river when tree lighting is placed along its length. As opposed to the boundary against the river in the northern development area, which is a tall concrete wall. The wall is considered likely to help reduce artificial light spill onto the river.

5. Biodiversity Enhancements & Green Infrastructure

The Environment Act (Wales) 2016 places a duty on competent authorities and councils to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (version 12), paragraph 6.2.5 requires Green Infrastructure considerations to be included with all planning applications. Development proposals must detail how green infrastructure considerations which are proportionate to the scale and nature of the plans are being provided.

Green infrastructure currently within the site takes the form of scattered trees, ornamental planting and semi improved grassland. The River Afan sits adjacent to both areas of development and whilst the river is not within the site boundary it does provide habitat connectivity into the wider landscape and should be considered as part of the development proposals.

Detailed development plans are not available at present however general considerations to green infrastructure to be considered as part for the development include:

- Paragraph 6.4.42 of Planning Policy Wales (version 12) requires that at least three trees of a similar type and compensatory size are planted for every tree lost. The removal of mature trees should be limited as far as possible.
- Sensitive lighting to prevent light spill into adjacent natural habitat and the River Afan. Light spill could affect how wildlife move through habitat within the site and also the habitats adjacent to the site.
- Both areas of the development site are urban in nature. Whilst native planting is always preferred, in an urban environment non native species can provide a valuable nectar resource for invertebrates. Fruit trees and raised planted which use nectar rich planting species, that do not vigorously spread, could provide an enhancement for wildlife.

The Environment Act (Wales) 2016 places a duty on competent authorities such as Neath Port Talbot Council to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The below bullet points are some simple measures that could be achieved to enhance the biodiversity of the site:

- The provision of integrated bird boxes within any new facade created within the building. A variety of bird boxes can be used but all boxes must be placed at least 2m high from ground floor.
- The provision of integrated bat boxes within any new facade created within the building. A variety of bat boxes can be used but all boxes must be placed at least

2m high from ground floor. Bat boxes must be located at least 2m away from any external light source including windows.

- Native species should be used within the soft landscaping works on the site. Suitable long term management of soft landscaping also helps ensure spaces are useful to wildlife. Consideration to management of grassland within the site to create a diverse native sward would be welcomed.
- All fencing across the site must be hedgehog friendly in design. A friendly design is considered to allow passage of small animals across the site. Close board or mesh fencing should provide either a continuous gap between the bottom of the fence and ground of approximately 13cm or 13cm by 13cm gaps cut every 3m along fencing.

Appendix 1 – Plant Species Recorded

Species	Common Name
Trees & Scrub	
<i>Taxus baccata</i>	Yew
<i>Betula pendula</i>	Silver Birch
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	Alder
<i>Rubus fruticosus agg</i>	Bramble
Herbaceous Plants	
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Common Mouse Ear
<i>Geranium molle</i>	Doves foot cranesbill
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	cock's-foot
<i>Bella perenis</i>	Daisy
<i>Ficaria verna</i>	Lesser celandine
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb Robert
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual meadow grass
<i>Trifolium sp</i>	Clover sp
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping buttercup
<i>Taraxacum officinalis agg</i>	Dandelion

Appendix 2 – Site Photographs

Site North of River Afan



South west view of building



North west view of building



North view of building



South east view of building



North east view of building



Access road into site boundary



Car park to east of building



Shrub planting to east of paved area



Water feature to south of building



Paved area to south of building

Site South of River Afan



View of River looking south



North of site looking southwards



Land to the south of site



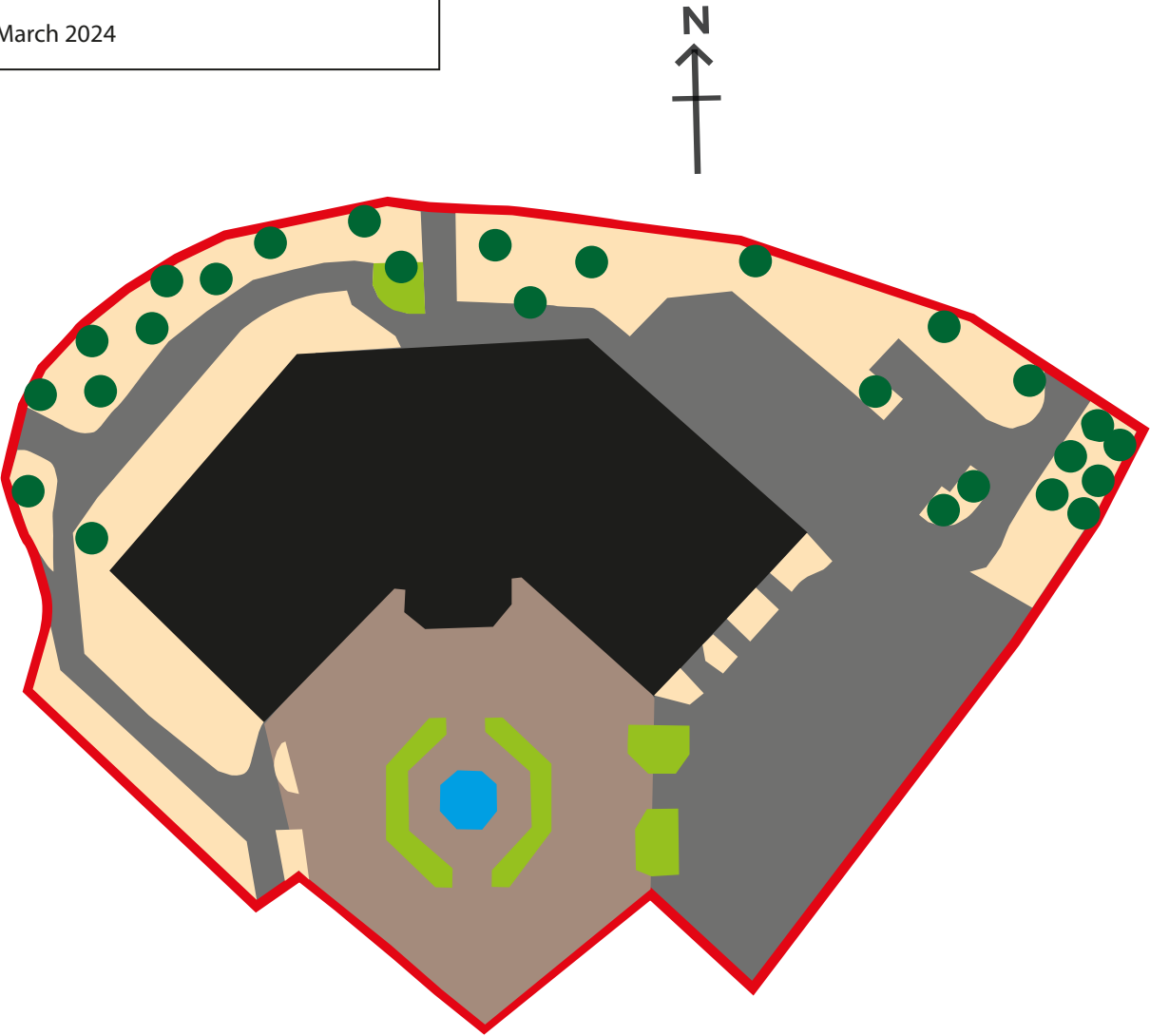
Bridge and canopy which separate the public open space

Appendix 3– Site Habitat Map

PRINCESS ROYAL THEATRE, PORT TALBOT

Habitat Map - Land North of the River Afan

March 2024

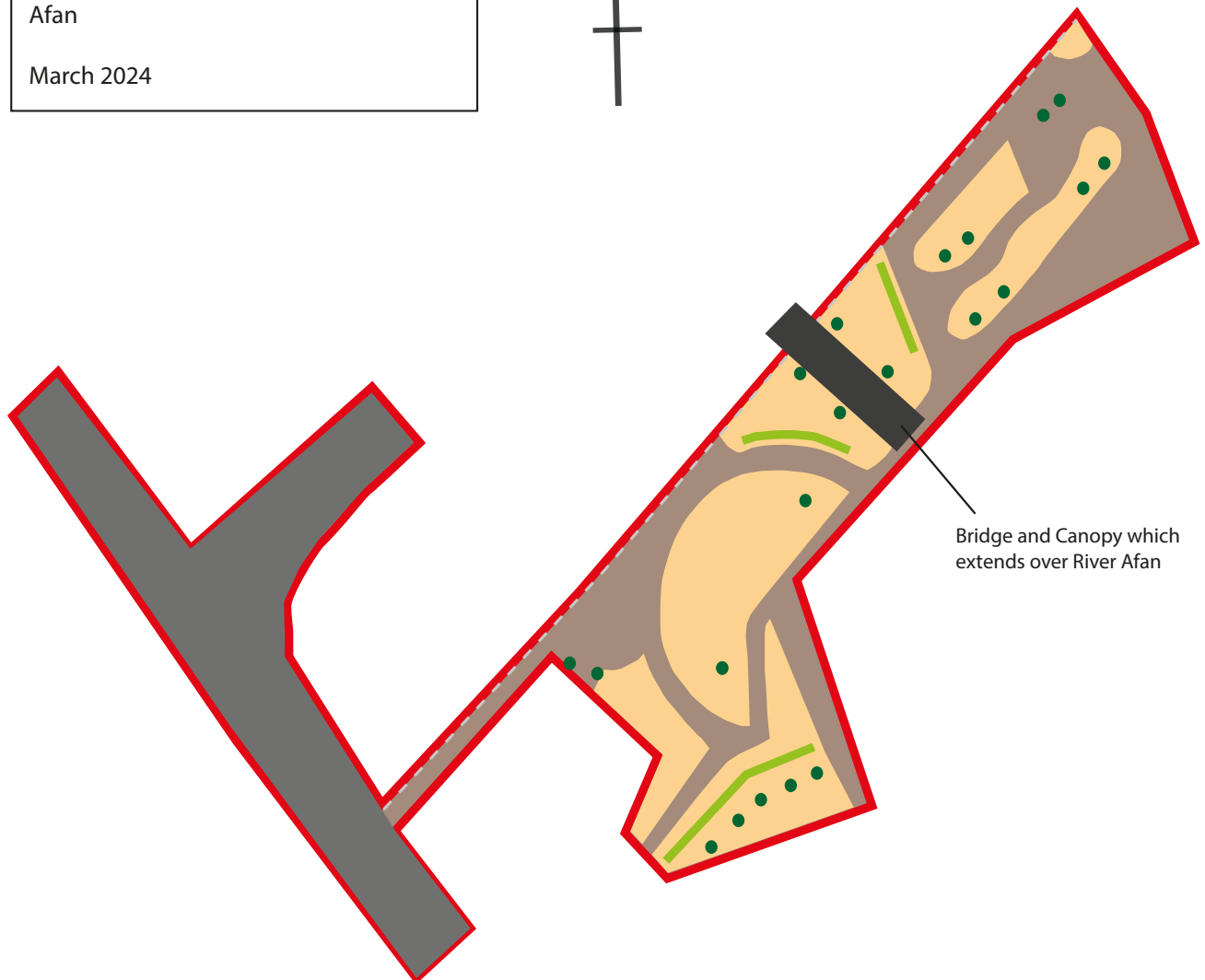


	Paved Ground		Water Fountain
	Building		Mature Tree
	Semi Improved Grassland		Site Boundary
	Ornamental Planting		Tarmac

PRINCESS ROYAL THEATRE, PORT TALBOT

Habitat Map - Land South of the River
Afan

March 2024



- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
|  | Semi Improved Grassland |
|  | Paved Ground |
|  | Tarmac |
|  | Ornamental Shrub Planting |
|  | Metal Fence Line |
|  | Site boundary |
|  | Mature Tree |

Appendix 4 - Aerial View of Site Location



Appendix 5 – Invertebrate Habitat Potential Assessment

Table 1. Summary of the 11 habitat elements assessed by IHP survey.

Habitat element	No.	Comments
Decaying Wood	HE1	In all its forms; from decaying wood on/in large trees to woodland floor debris
Rotational Management	HE2	Planned or serendipitous; and whether for nature conservation or other purposes
Nectar Resources	HE3	As a proxy for nectar- and pollen resources, as assessment of pollen resources is impracticable on a walk-through survey
Wet Substrates	HE4	Including marginal, marshy, muddy and seasonally inundated habitats, as well as flushes
Open Water Habitats	HE5	The open water element of rivers, lakes, ponds, streams, ditches, etc.
Structural Patchwork	HE6	Habitat mosaics, including, but by no means restricted to open mosaic habitats on previously developed land
Still Air (S)	HE7	Suntraps and still-air microclimates in open situations; the term 'still air' is used in preference to 'wind breaks' as many rigid wind breaks are likely to produce turbulent air in their lee
Still Air (H)	HE8	Humid still-air microclimates in sheltered and shaded situations
Connectivity	HE9	Landscape-scale connectivity between the site and external habitats
Ecoclines	HE10	A graded transition between two or more broad habitats
Bare Earth	HE11	Unshaded bare or sparsely vegetated well-drained substrate, regardless of soil type