2024

Keepers Lodge
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

EcoVigour
Integrated Environmental Management

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CONTENTS

1 Non-Technical Summary 0
2 Introduction 0
2.1 Project Background 0
2.2 Survey Area Description 0
2.3 Works Required 1
3 Methodology 0
3.1 Desk Study 0
3.2 Field work 0
3.2 Limitations 0
4 Results & Analysis – Desk Study 1
4.1 Designated sites 1
4.2 Ancient Woodland 2
4.3 Waterbodies 2
4.4 Species 4
5 Results & Analysis – field work 8
5.1 Habitat Survey 8
5.2 Species 9
6 Recommendations 12
6.1 Designated Sites 12
6.2 Habitats 12
6.3 Species 12
6.4 Net Benefit for Biodiversity 14
7 References 0
8 Appendix A - Site Photographs 0
Appendix B – Species List 0
Appendix C - Legislation 0
8.1 INTERNATIONAL 0
8.2 NATIONAL (UK) 0
8.3 NATIONAL (WALES) 1
8.4 LOCAL AND REGIONAL 2

FIGURES

Figure 1 - Survey location for Keepers Lodge.....1
Figure 2 - Statutory designated sites within 2km of Keepers Lodge.....1
Figure 3 - Ancient woodland within 2km of Keepers Lodge. 2
Figure 4 - Watercourses within 2km of Keepers Lodge. 3
Figure 5 - Waterbodies within the survey area.....4
Figure 6 - Bird species records within 2km of Keepers Lodge. 5
Figure 7 - Bat species records within 2km of Keepers Lodge.....6
Figure 8 - Terrestrial/aquatic mammal species records within 2km of Keepers Lodge.....7
Figure 9 - Reptile and amphibian species records within 2km of Keepers Lodge.....7
Figure 10 - INNS species records within 2km of Keepers Lodge. 8

TABLES

Table 1: Technical Summary Table.....0
Table 2: Statutory Sites 1
Table 3: Non-Statutory Sites 1

1 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The summary below is based on the current understanding of the works criteria and survey remit. Recommendations for additional ecological work and other implementable measures are based on best available information on potential future requirements. Further consultation may be required for future works undertaken by Monmouthshire County Council.

Please refer to Section 5 for legislative context and more detailed description of recommendations.

Table 1: Technical Summary Table

Feature or Species	PEA Recommendations Summary
Habitat	Semi-natural ancient woodland edge borders the property grounds. Within the grounds there is a mix of residential buildings, artificial sealed land surface, barns, hedgerow, stream, standing open water, pasture, and meadow grassland. Works should be considerate towards the existing habitat and the flora and fauna associated with them. Features are currently present across the property which aid nature, such as a wildlife pond, bird and bat boxes. Habitats should be enhanced for the benefit of pollinators, amphibians, reptiles and small mammals.
Designated Sites	There are 2 statutory designated sites within 2km of the property. Cilybebyll is located 315 away, and Coen Cwn DJ, Gilmaengwyn is 1123m away. Swansea Canal, a non-statutory designated site, is located 760m away. Works are considered localised and of sufficient distance from the designated sites for impacts to be considered as negligible.
Bats	The property requires a preliminary roost assessment from a licensed bat ecologist to evaluate further recommendations. Potential bat droppings were discovered within the loft space and potential roost features are present across the property. Several trees have multiple PRF-1's, including a medium sized oak tree 15m from the house, and trees on the woodland edge adjacent to where solar panels are being installed. Disturbance around trees with PRF-1's should be minimal. The stable due to be demolished was deemed negligible for roosting bats.
Terrestrial/aquatic mammals	*Hazel dormice* Despite an absence of dormice records with habitat connectivity to the property, surrounding ancient semi-natural woodland habitat is suitable to support a large population of undocumented dormice. However, they would be unlikely to utilise the more open habitat within the boundaries of the property, so works should cause minimal disturbance if they were to be present. Further ecological guidance would be required if the scope of works changes such as significant scrub/tree or hibernacula removal within proximity to the woodland edge. *Otter* Otter records are present within 500m of the data search. Otters are highly unlikely to be encountered utilising the surrounding waterbody/watercourse during works, however if they are, works should stop to allow a safe passing through. *Water vole* Water vole have been recorded within 1km of the property. Habitat suitability of the watercourse/waterbody within the site is low for water vole, and likely too small to sustain a population. Works should not interfere with any water vole potentially present if they remain 5m from the watercourse, and woodland side of the waterbody. *Badger* Badger have been recorded 480m away from the property within the data search, and the species is highly likely to use the surrounding woodland and may potentially pass through the property grounds at night. No field signs were observed during the walkover, however a pre-works check for setts within 30m of the works print is recommended before commencing. *Hedgehog*

Feature or Species	PEA Recommendations Summary
	Hedgehog has been recorded 750m away, and the species is likely to utilise the surrounding woodland and property grounds. Hibernacula (vegetation / rubble piles) should be removed with caution, and at temperatures of above 10°C. Hedgehog holes should be incorporated into the gravel boards of new fences to allow ecological permeability of the site.
Birds	Habitat around the property is highly suitable for a range of foraging and nesting bird species. Numerous bird nesting boxes have been erected upon and around the property, and birds have been reported to have previously nested in gaps within the soffit and fascia of the porch. Additionally, there appears to be bird droppings within the loft. Historic nests belonging to swift, barn swallow or house martin are present within the stables due to be demolished. Nesting birds are fully protected by law, and works should be undertaken outside of the main bird nesting season of April – September inclusive. If vegetation clearance works are required during the nesting period, an ecologist should undertake a check for nesting birds within the vegetation, not more than 24hrs before clearance is completed. To compensate for the loss of bird nesting habitat within the buildings to be demolished, bird boxes should be erected within suitable trees around the property boundary. These should include swift, swallow and house martin boxes.
Amphibians	*Great crested newt* No records were returned for GCN within the data search but aquatic and terrestrial habitat within the site is suitable for use by this species. No works are planned to the waterbody on site, but works will be required within potential terrestrial habitat. A precautionary approach will be adopted to amphibian species, with a Precautionary Method Statement followed in respect of reptiles, amphibians and small mammals. Under this vegetation will be cleared using a two stage cut, with vegetation initially removed to 150mm above ground level and then to ground level, following an inspection of the ground beneath. Features which could be used for refuge by amphibians will be left in-situ or will be dismantled by hand. These measures should be set out within a combined Method Statement for amphibians and reptiles. *Common amphibian species* Frog activity has been reported within the waterbody. It is highly likely for common amphibian species to be utilising the pond and its surroundings. Whilst these are protected, the protection only extends to trade, however good practice should be enforced such as not removing hibernacula at temperatures below 10°C to ensure the species do not come to harm. A midwife toad has been recorded 584m from the property in 2020 - this species is not native to the UK and should be reported to an ecologist in the unlikely event one is found.
Reptiles	No reptile records were found within the data search, however habitat around the property is suitable for common reptiles such as grass snake, slow worm and common lizard. Care should be taken to avoid harm for these species, such as not removing hibernacula at temperatures below 10°C. A Precuationary Method Statement will be followed in respect of reptiles to ensure there is no harm to this species during vegetation clearance and topsoil stripping. Additional hibernacula should be created for reptiles, around the property boundary, using rubble, timber and brash cleared during the works.
INNS (plants)	A large patch of Himalayan balsam was identified during the walkover in the area behind the stables due to be demolished. This should be left in situ to prevent further spread, and care should be taken to make sure clothing and tools are not contaminated with seeds during the months of August – October, which can spread up to 7m from the plant.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

2.1.1 EcoVigour Ltd was instructed to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of Keepers Lodge, to assess the ecological constraints likely to affect any works upon the property and to support a potential planning application.

2.1.2 The objectives for the survey were:

- To undertake an Ecological Desk Study to identify Designated Sites and Species of interest;
- To undertake a walkover of the site;
- To identify ecological features on or near the site that could pose a constraint to any proposed works;
- To make recommendations for any valuable habitats to be considered, through retention or enhancement, or if this is not possible, by habitat mitigation or compensation;
- To assess the site's potential to support protected species and make recommendations for further survey where required to clarify potential ecological constraints and inform design proposals;
- To identify opportunities for incorporating biodiversity enhancements into the development proposals;
- To identify the presence of any invasive non-native species on site.

2.1.3 The ecological report has been prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) guidance document *'Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal - Second Edition*' (CIEEM, 2017).

2.1.4 The objective of this report is to provide a preliminary ecological assessment of the site based on the currently anticipated design.

2.1.5 Recommendations for further surveys are provided where necessary.

2.2 SURVEY AREA DESCRIPTION

2.2.1 The site is located at Keepers Lodge, Swansea, West Glamorgan, SA8 3JP. OS Grid reference: SN 74216 05046

2.2.2 Keepers lodge is a rural residential property located northeast to the town of Pontardawe. The property includes the main residential property, three stable / storage buildings and a separate modular building, which is also used as a residential property.

2.2.3 The site is surrounded by woodland. The woodland to the west of the property is designated as Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland. To the west beyond the woodland is the River Tawe, approximately 300m at its nearest point. Beyond this lies the A4067 highway and then the Swansea Canal.

2.2.4 The surrounding habitat is predominantly a combination of agricultural land and woodland, with the urban settlements of Pontardawe, Altwen and Rhos to the south and west.

2.2.5 Several habitat types are contained within the properties grounds, which is bordered by ancient semi-natural woodland to the NW with further woodland blocks around the remainder of the boundary.

2.2.6 Photographs are at **Appendix A**.

2.2.7 The approximate survey area is illustrated below, highlighted orange:

Figure 1 - Survey location for Keepers Lodge.

2.3 Works Required

2.3.1 The following works are currently under consideration, with a potential planning application pending.

- Demolition and re-build of a residential property.
- Demolition of stables to make way for a vegetable garden.
- Installation of solar panels into the field adjacent to property.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 DESK STUDY

3.1.1 The LERC Wales Biodiversity Information and Reporting Centre (Aderyn) was consulted in order to provide biological information on the presence of international, nationally designated sites, local designations within 2kms, protected and priority species and other species of conservation concern within 2kms of the proposed site. The LERC reference number for the report is 0245-410.

3.1.2 The desk study included a review of OS mapping for waterbodies within 500m of the site.

3.1.3 Only a summary of the biological records data has been provided in this report as general publication is not allowed, due to species confidentiality.

3.2 FIELD WORK

3.1.1 The walkover was conducted by Josie Emmerson, an EcoVigour Ltd ecologist on 21/08/2024. The survey was conducted using methods outlined in the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)'s '*Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – A Technique for Environmental Audit*' (JNCC, 2010). The survey consisted of a visual survey of the site, identifying the broad habitat types present, identifying the suitability of the site to support protected and priority species.

3.1.2 Incidental observations of protected and/or priority species and the potential for such species to occur on site (and in the surrounding landscape where relevant) were also noted, however no specific protected/priority species surveys were undertaken as part of this preliminary ecological assessment.

3.1.3 A search for invasive non-native species as defined in Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended, was made during the survey. Under the Act it is an offence to spread, or cause the spread of, these species.

3.2 LIMITATIONS

3.2.1 Third party biological records do not provide a full species list for the area. The absence of records does not necessarily indicate absence of a species or habitat from the area as it may be that these have not yet been recorded from the area or have not yet been digitised.

3.2.2 The results of the survey and assessment undertaken by EcoVigour Ltd are representative at the time of survey.

3.2.3 This document does not provide a comprehensive list of botanical species on site with only plant species characteristic of each habitat and any incidental observations of notable plant species being recorded. In addition, many plant species are only evident at certain times of the year; therefore, some plant species may have been undetected.

3.2.4 No targeted ecological surveys were undertaken as part of this assessment to determine the presence of specific species.

4 Results & Analysis – Desk Study

4.1 Designated Sites

4.1.1 There are 2 statutory designated sites within 2km of the site boundary, Cilybebyll, and Coed Cwm Du, Gilmaengwyn.

Table 2: Statutory Sites

Site Name	Designation	Reason for Designation	Distance from Site (m)
Cilybebyll	Special Scientific Site of Interest.	Species rich grassland and wet pastures.	315m NE
Coed Cwn DJ, Gilmaengwyn	Special Scientific Site of Interest.	Sessile oak woodland.	1123m North

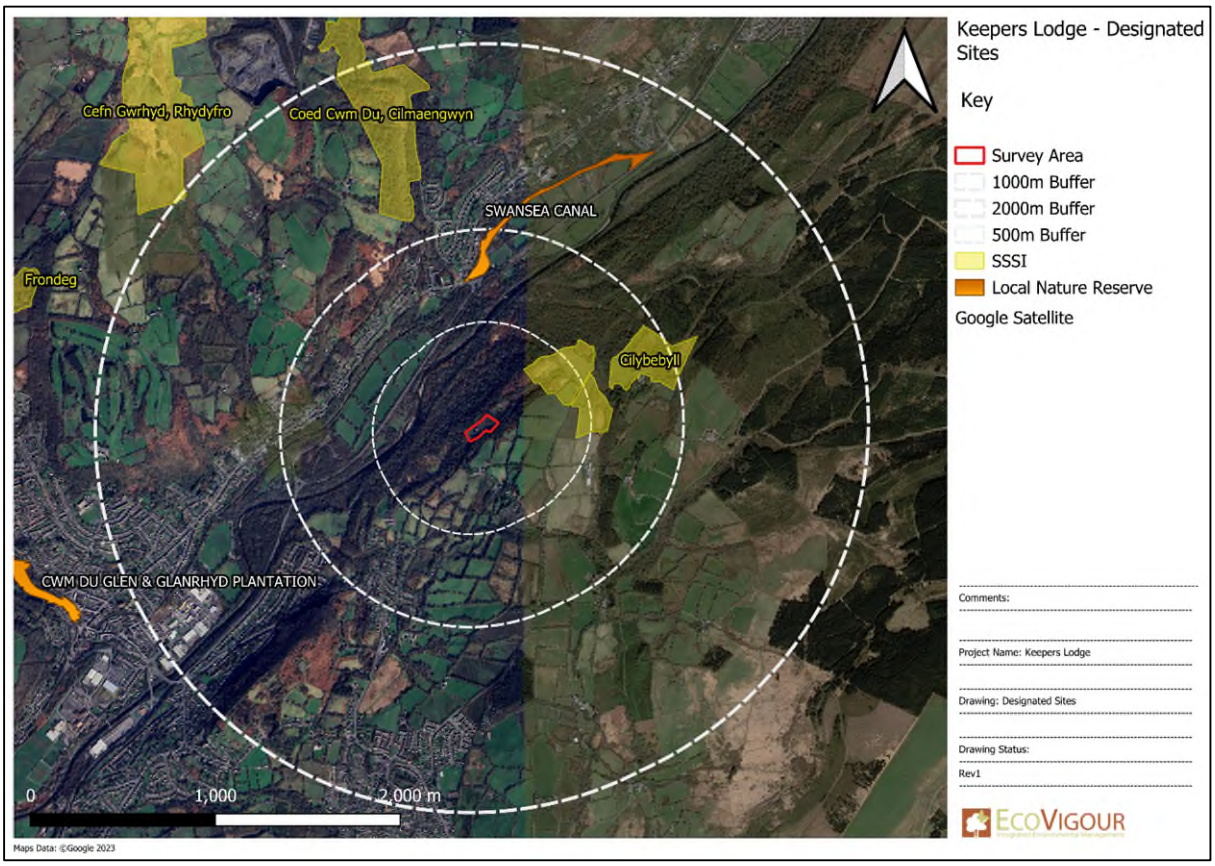

Figure 2 - Statutory designated sites within 2km of Keepers Lodge.

4.1.2 There is 1 non-statutory designated site within 2km of the site boundary.

Table 3: Non-Statutory Sites

Site Name	Designation	Reason for Designation	Distance from Site (m)
Swansea Canal	-Local Nature Reserve	Importance for species	760m NW

4.2 Ancient Woodland

3.2.1 There are numerous ancient woodland sites within 2km of the property. Ancient semi-natural woodland surrounds the property's boundary. There are numerous other ancient woodland sites within 2km of the property.

Figure 3 - Ancient woodland within 2km of Keepers Lodge.

4.3 Waterbodies

3.2.2 A pond is situated approximately 15m SE from the main property building, which is connected with a small stream which feeds and flows from the pond. The pond is bordered on the southern side by woodland, and maintained grass is present around the northern edge interspersed with taller semi-aquatic vegetation.

3.2.3 There is likely to be further unmapped small waterbodies and watercourses through the surrounding environment.

3.2.4 The closest main watercourse is the River Tawe, located approximately 300m west of the property.

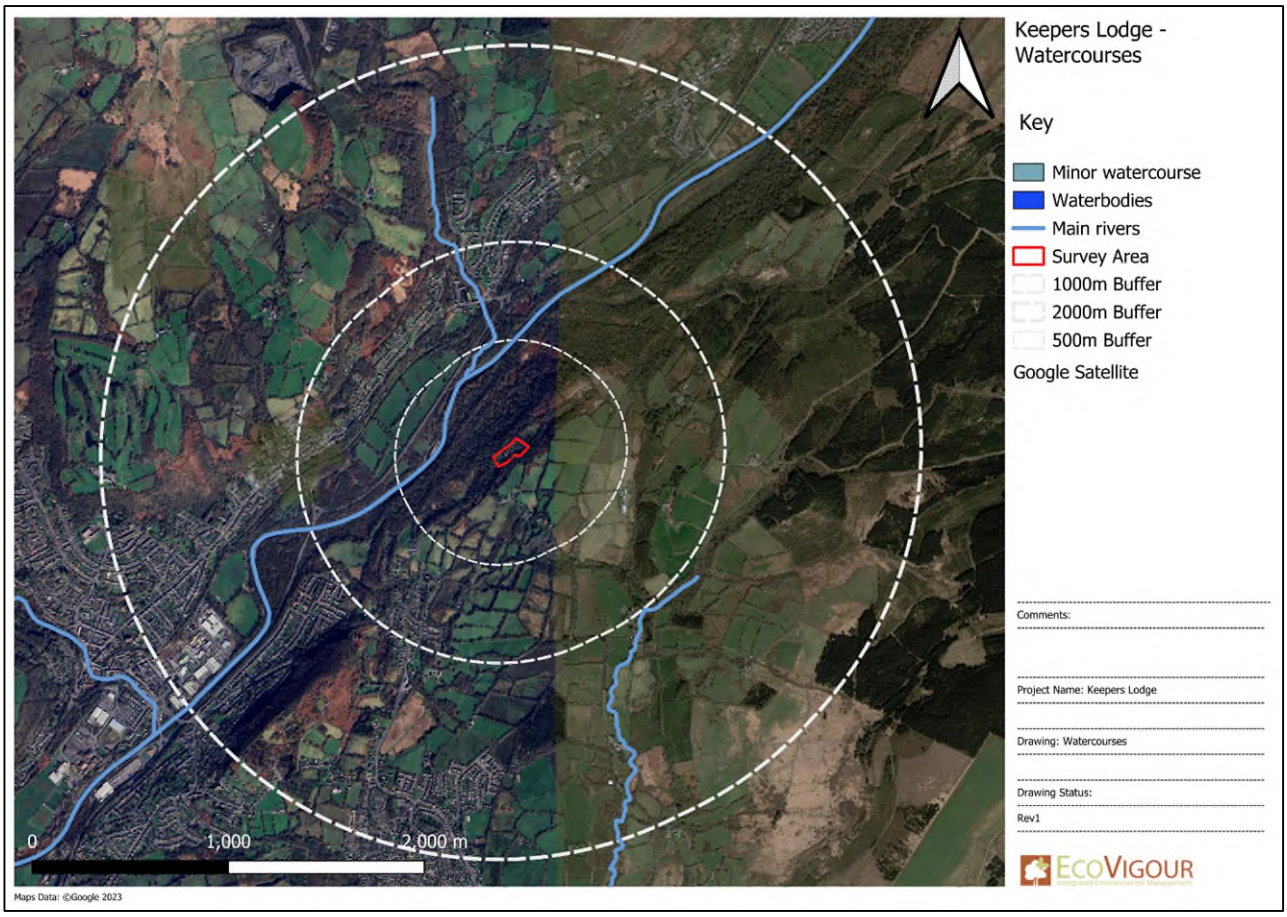

Figure 4 - Watercourses within 2km of Keepers Lodge.

Figure 5 - Waterbodies within the survey area.

4.4 Species

4.4.1 A total of 372 species records were identified in the biological records search information. Of these:

- 162 were of Priority Species;
- 85 were Species of Conservation Concern; and
- 69 were Locally Important Species.

4.4.2 There was a total of 55 records of invasive non-native species.

3.2.5 **Bird species -** 165 records of birds within 3km have been produced from the data search. The closest of which being a great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), 365m from the property, recorded in 2023. Grey wagtail is the most recent record, from 27/04/2024, 473m away.

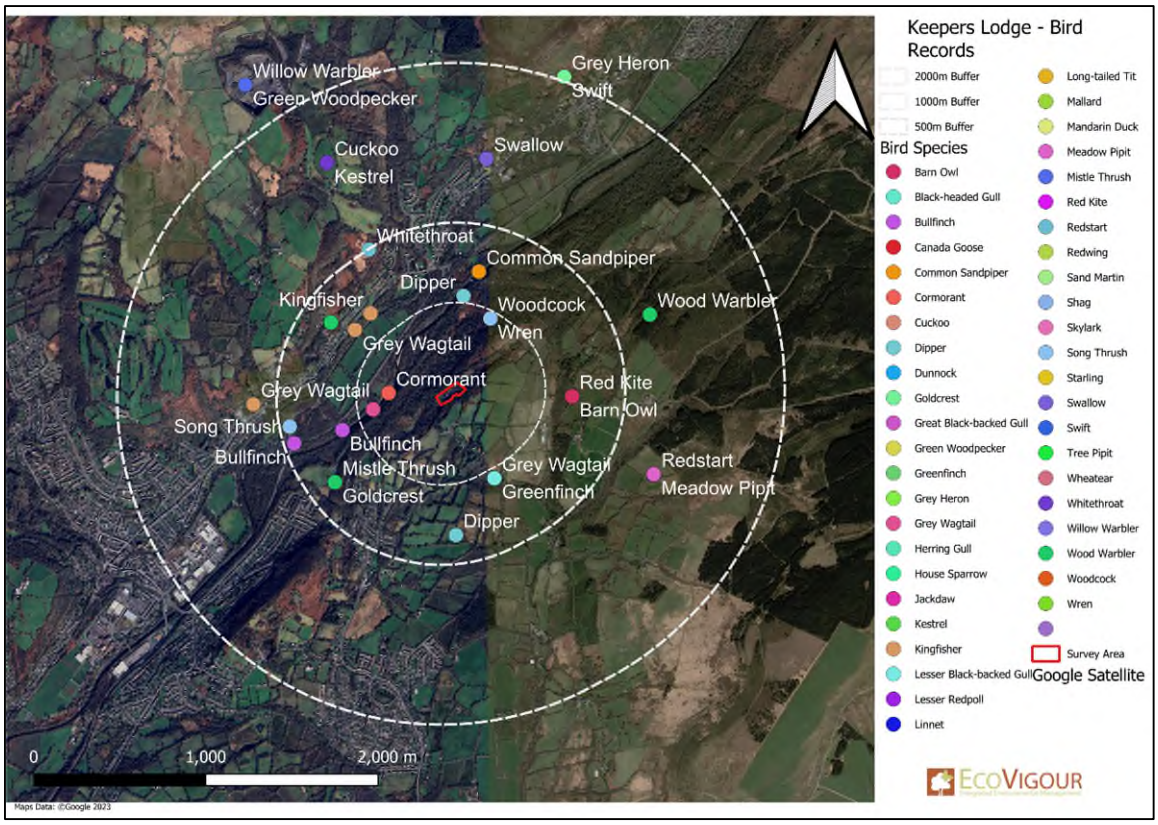

Figure 6 - Bird species records within 2km of Keepers Lodge.

3.2.6 **Bat species -** The data search produced 28 records of bats within 1 km of the property, 7 species have been identified including common pipistrelle (pipistrellus pipistrellus), soprano pipistrelle (*pipistrellus pygmaeus*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctule*), brown long eared (*Plecotus auritus*), natterers (*Myotis nattereri*), daubentons (*Myotis daubentonii*). A noctule bat is the closest record at 599m away, and the most recent is a natterers bat from 2012. Due to the property being rurally located, this is likely to be an underrepresentation of species utilising the area at current.

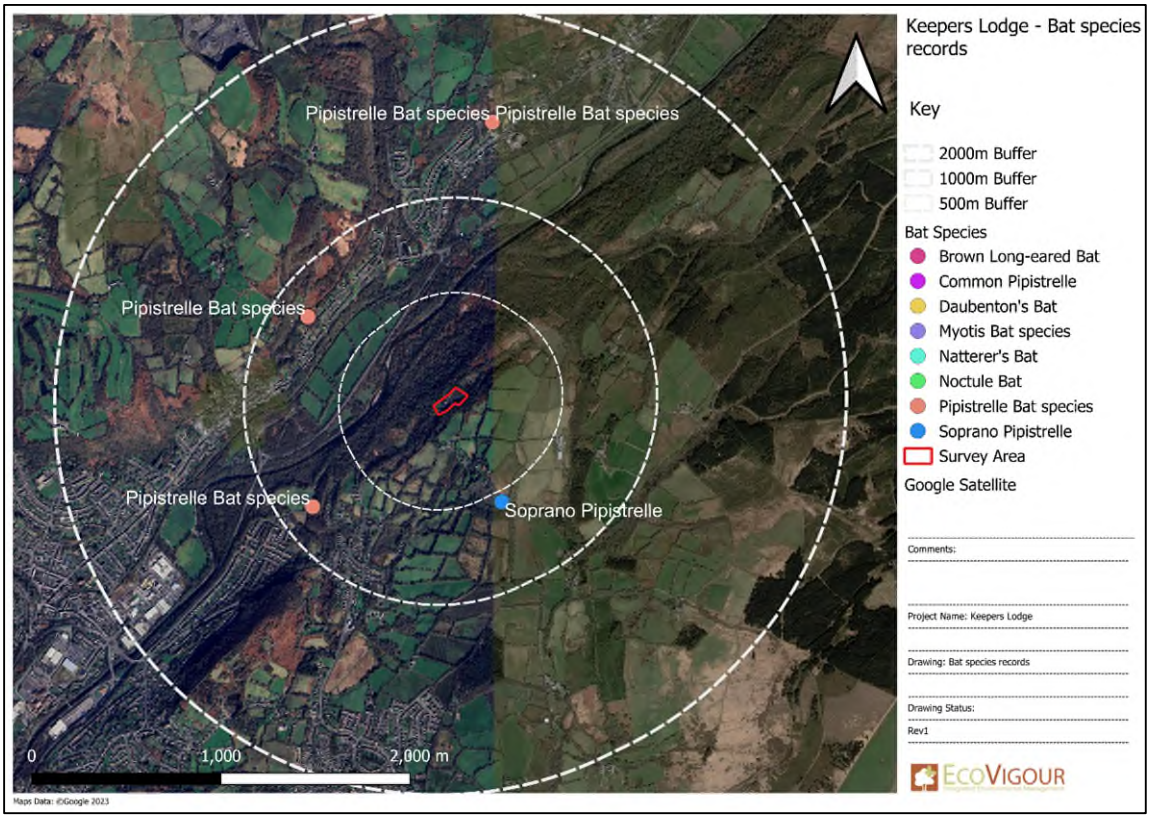

Figure 7 - Bat species records within 2km of Keepers Lodge.

3.2.7 **Terrestrial/aquatic mammal species –** 65 records of 6 terrestrial mammal species have been logged within the data search, including otter, hazel dormouse, hedgehog, polecat, mink and water vole. The closest of which being European otter (*Lutra lutra*), 354m away, from 2002. The most (*Lutra lutra*), 320 meters away. Western European hedgehog is the most recent records, from 2020, 522m from the property.

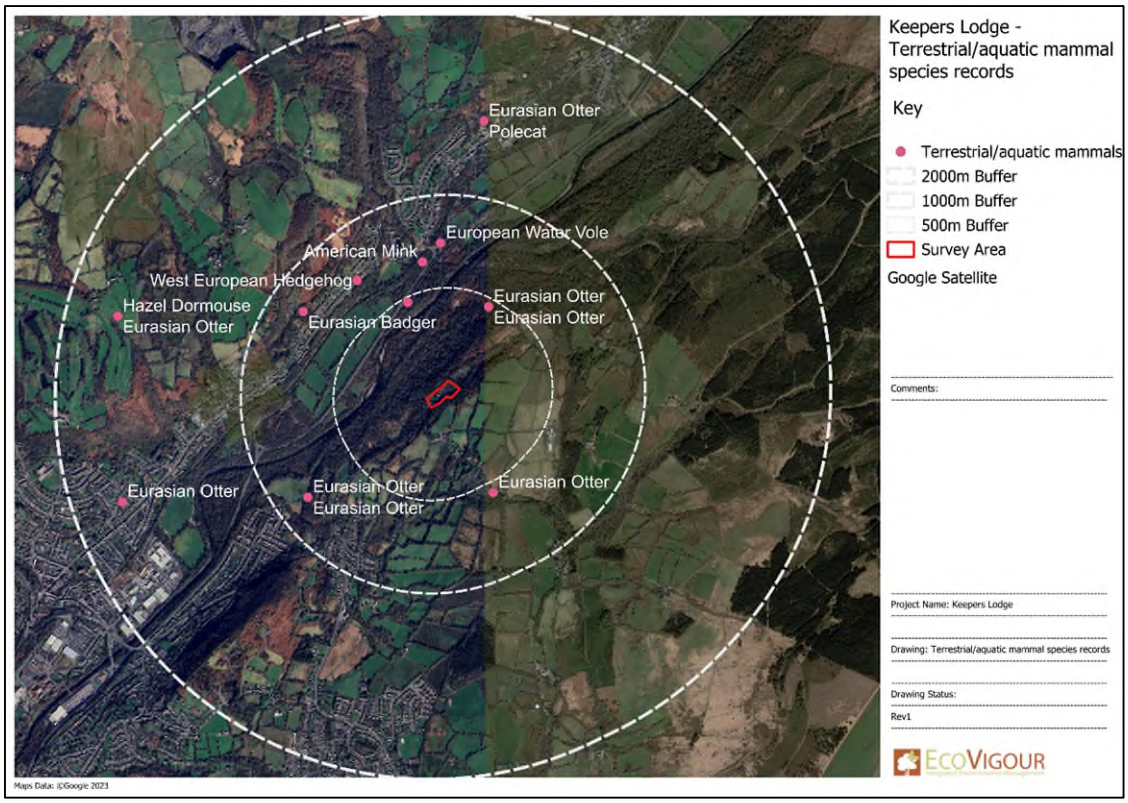

Figure 8 - Terrestrial/aquatic mammal species records within 2km of Keepers Lodge.

4.4.3 **Reptile and amphibian species** – 2 records including common frog and midwife toad have been logged within the data search. A midwife toad was recorded in 2020, 584m from the property. Common frog was recorded 787m from the property in 1988.

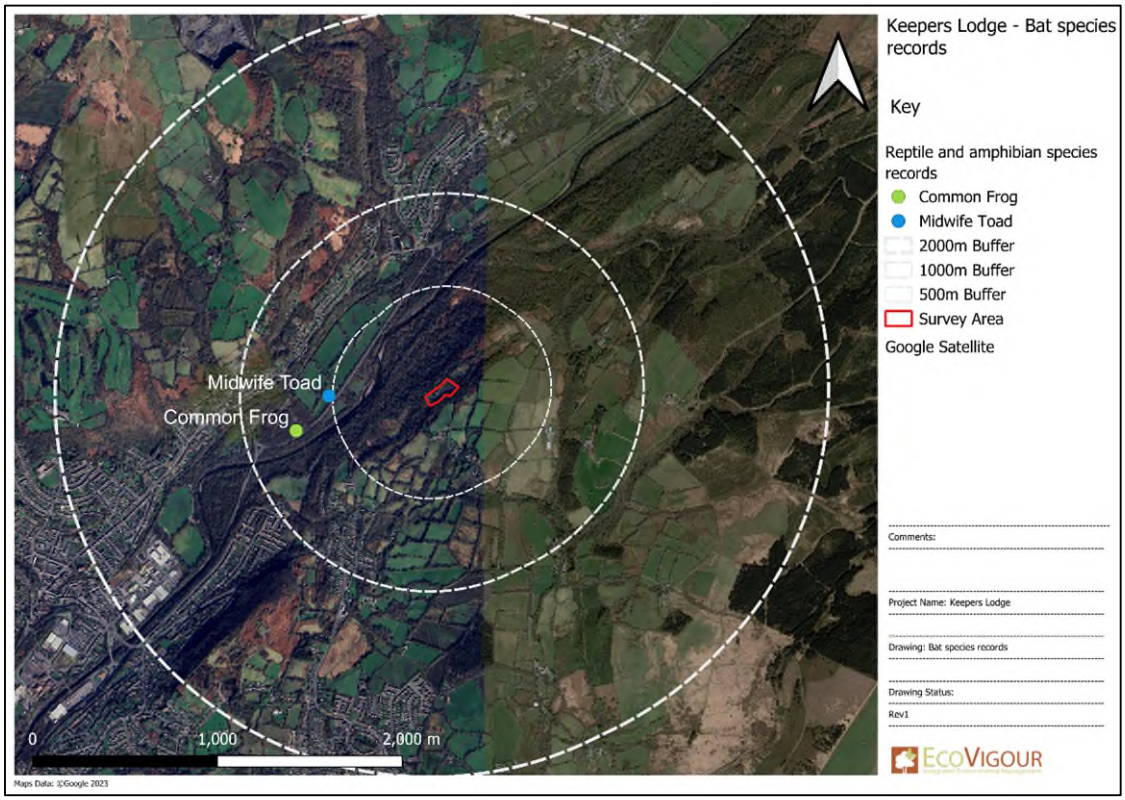

Figure 9 - Reptile and amphibian species records within 2km of Keepers Lodge.

3.2.8 **INNS –** 8 INNS plant species have been recorded within 2000m of the site. The closest of which is Japanese knotweed, 360m away.

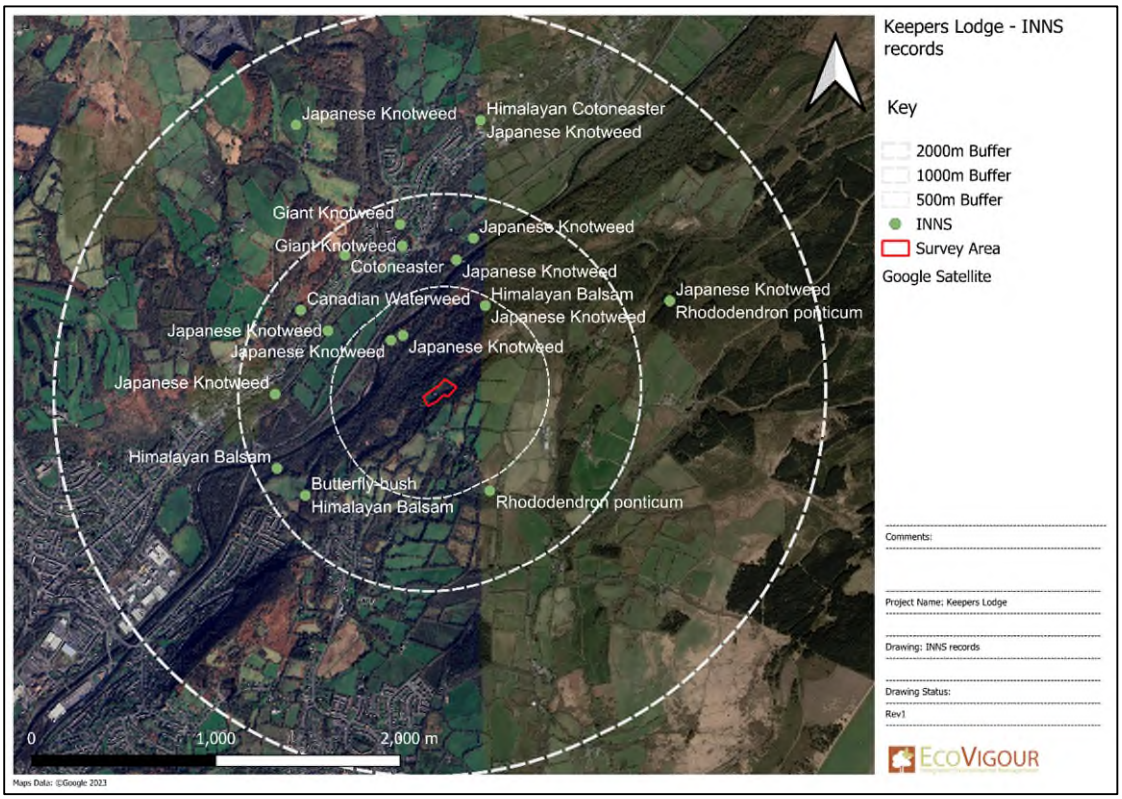

Figure 10 - INNS species records within 2km of Keepers Lodge.

5 Results & Analysis – Field Work

5.1 Habitat Survey

5.1.1 The site is surrounded by woodland. The woodland to the west of the property is designated as Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland. To the west beyond the woodland is the River Tawe, approximately 300m at its nearest point. Beyond this lies the A4067 highway and then the Swansea Canal.

5.1.2 The surrounding habitat is predominantly a combination of agricultural land and woodland, with the urban settlements of Pontardawe, Altwen and Rhos.

5.1.3 An unimproved north facing sloped neutral grassland/meadow field is located adjacent to the driveway. Thistle (*Cirsium spp.*), rushes (*Juncus spp.*), sorrel (*Rumex spp.*), willowherb (*Epilobium spp.*), nightshade (*Solanaceae spp.*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), hemp agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*), ragwort (*Senecio spp.*), water figwort (*Scrophularia auriculata*) and birds foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) include some of the species present. Small alder saplings grow throughout.

5.1.4 Mature ancient semi-natural woodland borders the properties boundary, comprised of trees such as oak (*Quercus robur*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), sycamore (*Acer psuedoplatanus*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and willow (*Salix spp.*).

5.1.5 A pond is located to the SE of the house, between the property and the woodland edge with small watercourses running to and from it, providing habitat for aquatic and amphibious species.

5.1.6 Horse grazed pasture is located to the rear of the property.

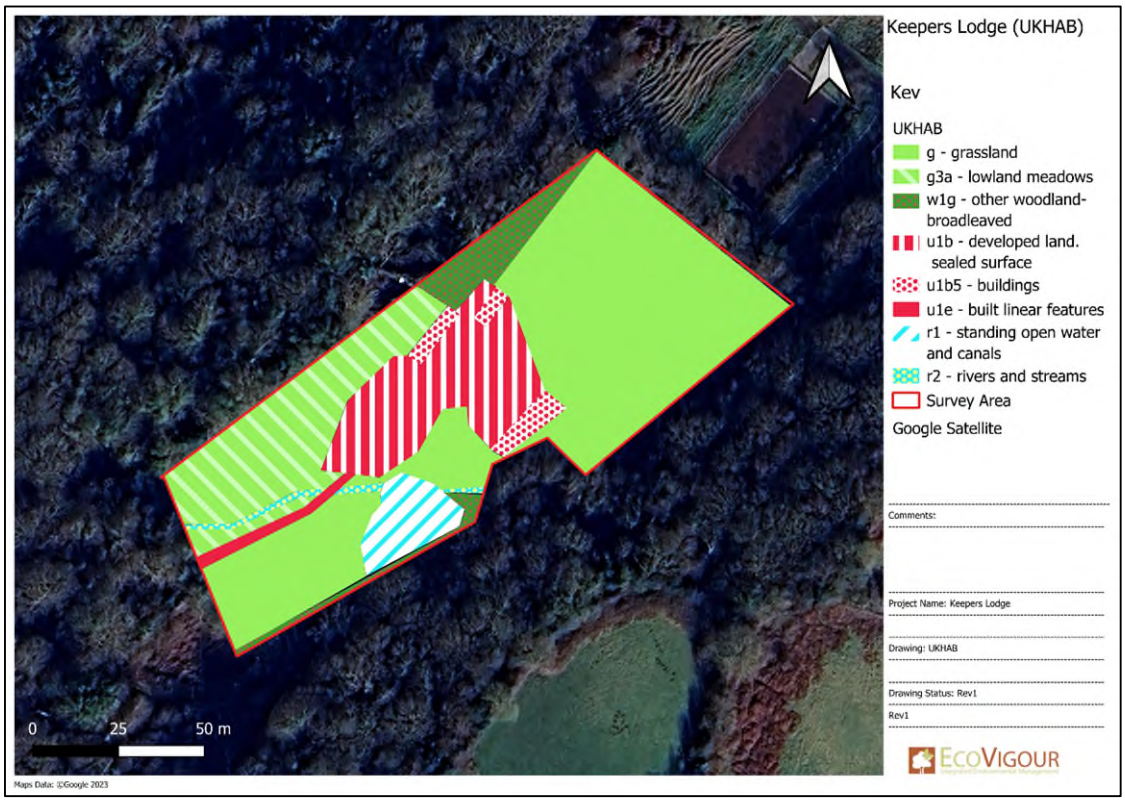

Figure 11 - UKHAB classification map for Keepers Lodge.

5.2 SPECIES

Bat Species (Chiroptera)

5.2.1 A matrix of various habitat types connected through linear features such as quiet roads, woodland edge, hedgerows and watercourses subject to an absence of light and noise creates an ideal habitat for a range of foraging, commuting and roosting bats.

5.2.2 The overall condition of the property and its roof is good, however it is important to note that bats can access roost spaces through entry points less than an inch wide. PRF's upon the main property structure were identified during the initial walkover, including gaps between the soffit and fascia of the front porch (see plate 9). Nesting birds were reported to have previously utilised these gaps, which reduces the suitability for use by bats.

5.2.3 A loft space is present within the property, which contained potential guano (bat droppings). On discovery of potential evidence of use by bats the loft space was exited immediately in line with legislation as the surveyor does not hold a Natural Resources Wales Bat Survey License.

5.2.4 The northern side stables due to be demolished (see plate 15) were inspected and deemed of negligible bat potential due to the openness, construction (corrugated steel roof), light levels and high disturbance. Historic bird nests were present throughout.

5.2.5 The property owner has reported that bat boxes have been installed within the surrounding woodland, described as being over 30m from the property.

5.2.6 Multiple trees with PRF's (potential roost features) were identified during the walkover. A medium sized oak tree with lifted bark, split branches and cavities is located at the edge of the front driveway 15m from the property (see plate 4). A large oak and standing deadwood with multiple PRF-1's are present at the woodland edge adjacent to the field where solar panels are to be installed (see plate 2).

5.2.7 Further assessment is required by a licensed bat ecologist in the form of a PRA (preliminary roost assessment), to determine the sites suitability for use by roosting bats

Terrestrial/aquatic mammal species

5.2.8 2 hazel dormouse records are present within the data search, however the most recent and closest of which is 1,381m away from 2005. Additionally, the record is separated from the property by the River Tawe. Despite lack of records with habitat connectivity to the property, absence cannot be ruled out. Surrounding dense semi-natural ancient woodland habitat is suitable for hazel dormice, with mature trees and a range of scrub understory plants. The woodland adjacent to the property is sizeable enough to support a population of dormice. It is unlikely that habitat suitable for use by dormice will be impacted as part of the works and hence, unless woodland or scrub clearance is required, this species will not be considered further.

5.2.9 Otter records are present within 500m of the property. Otters are unlikely to pass through the site, due to the small size of the watercourses around the property being unsuitable for swimming. However, absence cannot be completely ruled out as water levels may rise through the year.

5.2.10 Water vole have been recorded 816m from the property, however are unlikely to be present within the waterbody and watercourses across the site. Banks closest to the property itself were not steep enough for water voles to create burrows within, however banks along the furthest edge along the woodland could not be assessed. The small stream has suitable banks and vegetation however appears too shallow for water vole suitability. Overall, the area where there is potential suitability for water vole would be too small and isolated to sustain a population.

5.2.11 Hedgehog have been identified within the data search. Habitat around the property is suitable for the species, which is likely to utilise the area for foraging. Hibernacula is present, and the species may utilise the stables for refuge as access from the ground can be gained.

5.2.12 Badger records are present within the data search. The woodland habitat is highly suitable for badgers, which pass through the property's surroundings at night. No setts or field signs were found within 30m of the property itself, and no mammal trails were observed within the vicinity, however the woodland was not fully assessed, and setts may be present.

Reptiles and amphibians

5.2.13 No great crested newt records were produced within the data search, however due to the presence of the waterbody with signs of suitability and ample hibernacula within the surrounding woodland suitable tussocky grassland terrestrial habitat, absence is likely but cannot be ruled out. No further static waterbodies were identified, however there is potential for unmapped waterbodies within the woodland to be present.

5.2.14 Habitats around the site are suitable for a range of common reptile species. None were observed during the survey but their presence should be assumed. It is not proposed to clear large areas of vegetation suitable for use by reptiles, but suitable mitigation should be implemented during vegetation clearance.

Birds

5.2.15 Habitat around the property is highly suitable for a range of foraging and nesting bird species. Robin, wren, swift, jackdaw were observed during the walkover. Birds adapted to rural areas are likely to be present, including woodland specialist species, and raptors have been reported to utilise the area.

5.2.16 Bird nesting boxes have been erected upon and around the property however no signs of use were observed.

5.2.17 Birds have been reported to have previously nested in gaps within the soffit and fascia of the properties porch.

5.2.18 Bird droppings appeared to be present within the loft.

5.2.19 Historic nests belonging to swift, barn swallow or house martin are present within the stables due to be demolished to make way for growing patches.

Common Amphibians

5.2.20 No amphibians were observed during the site visit, however there is anecdotal evidence of frogs using the pond. The pond also has potential to support toads and newts.

5.2.21 Terrestrial habitat around the waterbody is suitable for amphibians to forage and hibernate in.

5.2.22 Amphibians may be a part of metapopulations supported by the wet woodland/marshy areas reported to be around the property.

Great Crested Newt

5.2.23 No great crested newt records were produced within the data search, however due to the presence of a waterbody with signs of suitability and ample hibernacula within the surrounding woodland suitable tussocky grassland terrestrial habitat, absence cannot be ruled out. No further static waterbodies were identified, however there is potential for unmapped waterbodies within the woodland to be present.

Reptiles

5.2.24 No reptiles were observed around the property during the visit, and none were identified during the walkover. However, the exposed sunny grassland areas and hibernacula around the property and the woodland edge are optimal for common reptile species such as slow worm and grass snake. Grass snakes may also utilise the watercourse/waterbody.

5.2.25 It is not proposed to clear large areas of vegetation suitable for use by reptiles, but suitable mitigation should be implemented during vegetation clearance.

Invasive non-native species

5.2.26 Himalayan balsam growth is prevalent around the stables area at the rear of the property (see plate 14).

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides a broad assessment of the information gathered and scopes out potential ecological vectors before remaining considerations and actions are proposed in the following Recommendations and Opportunities sections below.

6.1 DESIGNATED SITES

6.1.1 Works are localised enough to not have any impact on any statutory designated sites, which do not fall within the works area.

6.1.2 Ancient woodland has been identified around the properties perimeter, however is outside the scope of works and is unlikely to be effected. Secondary impacts of this, should be considered, predominantly the use of artificial lighting in respect of commuting and foraging bats.

6.2 HABITATS

6.2.1 Works should be considerate towards grassland species which may be impacted by the installation of solar panels, which will change the ecology of the field through creating more shade. This could be compensated for, through the planting of shade tolerant species and a more diverse meadow planting and management regime.

6.3 SPECIES

Bats

6.3.1 All British bats and any place used for shelter or protection, or breeding site or resting place (their roosts) are fully protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). It is an offence to disturb, damage or obstruct a bat roost.

6.3.2 Due to the potential for the main residential properties loft to host a historic or active bat roost (potential bat guano was noted during the initial survey of the loft), and other potential roost features around the soffit/fascia, a full Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) is recommended by a licensed bat ecologist to assess the potential of the property to be used by bats.

6.3.3 Trees with PRF-1's should also be inspected by a licensed bat ecologist if works are to enter a zone where disturbance to a roost may occur.

Dormouse

6.3.4 Dormice are designated and protected as a European protected species (EPS), which are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. It is an offence to kill, injure, disturb or capture dormice, or damage/destroy their breeding or resting places.

6.3.5 Works are unlikely to disturb any undocumented populations of dormice, however, if significant vegetation or hibernacula removal is required, an ecologist should be contacted for guidance. Should any evidence of the species be found, works should cease immediately as a licence from NRW will be required.

Common Amphibians

6.3.6 Whilst common amphibians are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, the protection only extends to trade. However, the common toad is a priority species under the NERC Act, and works should be considerate

towards the species. Hibernacula should be left to remain during Winter months, or removed at temperatures above 10°C to ensure harm does not occur.

6.3.7 A midwife toad has been recorded 584m from the property in 2020 - this species is not native to the UK and should be reported to an ecologist in the unlikely event one is found

Great Crested Newt

6.3.8 GCN are given full protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 {as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2010. This means GCN and their eggs, breeding sites and resting places are protected by law.

6.3.9 No records were returned for GCN within the data search but aquatic and terrestrial habitat within the site is suitable for use by this species. No works are planned to the waterbody on site, but works will be required within potential terrestrial habitat.

6.3.10 A precautionary approach will be adopted to amphibian species, where by vegetation will be cleared using a two stage cut, with vegetation initially removed to 150mm above ground level and then to ground level, following an inspection of the ground beneath. Features which could be used for refuge by amphibians will be left in-situ or will be dismantled by hand. These measures should be set out within a combined Method Statement for amphibians and reptiles.

Badgers

6.3.11 The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 states it is illegal to kill, injure or take a badger, and interfere with a sett through damaging, or disturbance.

6.3.12 Habitat in the surrounding woodland and sloped areas is suitable for setts. If works are to occur within 30m of the woodland edge, an ecologist should inspect for sett entrances no more than 48hours before works commence. Night works and the use of artificial lighting should not occur due to the likelihood for badgers to pass through the area at night.

Bird Species

6.3.13 All birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence to disturb damage or disturb any active nest, including during the building stage.

6.3.14 Due to the level of bird activity present and numerous nesting opportunities upon and around the property, works should occur outside of the main bird nesting period of March – September inclusive. Nesting activity from barn swallow/swift/house martin has been recorded within the barns and soffit/fascia of the house, which are species that return to their previous nests in future years.

Reptiles

6.3.15 All commonly occurring reptile species (common lizard, slow worm, grass snake and adder) are partially protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, making it an offence to injure or kill them.

6.3.16 The property grounds provide suitable habitat for this group; The presence of the common species of reptile such as slow worms should be assumed

6.3.17 Therefore, it is recommended that any works should be undertaken in accordance with a method statement in respect of reptiles. A method statement will be provided before works commence.

Hedgehog

6.3.18 Hedgehogs are protected in England under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and are also listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006). This species has not been confirmed but is likely present within the wider area.

Invasive Species

6.3.19 Himalayan balsam has been identified to be growing around the stables area at the rear or the property. Care should be taken during works to prevent further spread of the species. If works are to occur during August-October when the plant is seeding, an exclusion zone should be enforced to prevent spread of seeds which can disperse up to 7m from the plant.

6.4 NET BENEFIT FOR BIODIVERSITY

6.4.1 Planning Policy Wales (PPW 12), Chapter 6 sets objectives for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, through the planning process, including

- GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE: stronger emphasis on taking a proactive approach to green infrastructure, the submission of a proportionate green infrastructure statement with planning applications and signposting Building with Nature standards.
- NET BENEFIT FOR BIODIVERSITY AND THE STEP-WISE APPROACH: further clarity is provided on securing net benefit for biodiversity through the application of the step-wise approach, including the acknowledgement of off-site compensation measures as a last resort, and, the need to consider enhancement and long-term management at each step. The use of the green infrastructure statement as a means of demonstrating the stepwise approach is made explicit. A simplified diagram of the policy approach has been developed (included within PPW12). The importance of strategic collaboration to identify and capture larger scale opportunities for securing a net benefit for biodiversity is recognised.

6.4.2 For this assessment we have applied the DECCA Framework:

- **Diversity:** maintaining and enhancing diversity at every scale, including genetic, structural, habitat and between-habitat levels. This supports the complexity of ecosystem functions and interactions that deliver services and benefits.
- **Extent:** incorporating measures which maintain and increase the area of semi-natural habitat/features and linkages between habitats. In general, smaller ecosystems have reduced capacity to adapt, recover or resist disturbance.
- **Condition:** The condition of an ecosystem is affected by multiple and complex pressures acting both as short term and longer term types of disturbance. Both direct and wider impacts should be considered, for example avoiding or mitigating pressures such as climate change, pollution, invasive species, land management neglect etc.
- **Connectivity:** This refers to the links between and within habitats, which may take the form of physical corridors, stepping stones in the landscape, or patches of the same or related vegetation types that together create a network that enables the flow or movement of genes, species and natural resources. Developments should take opportunities to develop functional habitat and ecological networks within and between ecosystems, building on existing connectivity.
- **Aspects of ecosystem resilience** (adaptability, recovery and resistance): ecosystem resilience is a product of the above four attributes. Adaptability, recovery and resistance to/from a disturbance are defining features of ecosystem resilience.

6.4.3 This NBB assessment uses the following industry recognised best practice methodologies:

- CIEEM Briefing Paper – Welsh Governemnt's Approach to Net Benefits for Biodiversity and the DECCA Framework in the Terrestrial Planning System – September 2022;
- Natural England (2019). Biodiversity Metric 2.0 – Auditing and Accounting for Biodiversity;

The scale of the development is relatively small with much of the development footprint being within the existing property footprint. The following ecological enhancements should be considered as part of the development:

- Planting of mixed native species flowering plants and shrubs, for the benefit of pollinator species. Species such as primrose, forget-me-not, bugle, stinking hellebore, honeysuckle, foxglove, vipers bugloss, heathers, aster, snowdrop and campion. These will provide a variety of flowers, throughout the year.
- Some suitable bird nesting habitat is likely to be lost during the development and hence consideration should be given to the placement of suitable bat and bird boxes on trees around the property boundary. Bird boxes should include swift, swallow and house martin boxes.
- Hibernacula should be left to remain, or added to using, rubble, timber and brash from vegetation clearance works, to benefit a range of species including invertebrates, amphibians/reptiles, and small mammals.
- The creation of a compost heap in an area of the garden / grounds for the benefit of invertebrates and in turn reptiles, amphibians and small mammals.
- If new fences are erected, holes should be left in gravel boards to allow small mammals to pass through.
- A hedgehog box should be placed in the base of hedgerow adjacent to the compost heap.

In consideration of the DECCA Framework:

- **Diversity:** The site is to be used for residential use and the grounds will be managed for amenity value. Part of the proposed works are for the creation of vegetable and planting beds. As part of this it is proposed to plant a diverse range of plants, including native species flowering shrubs to provide benefit for pollinators.
- **Extent:** The new residential property will largely lie within the footprint of the current property. It is also proposed to remove some dilapidated wooden stables and outbuildings and replace these with a planting area. Vegetation around the periphery of the property will be retained and the remainder of the green estate will be utilised for amenity value, including a diverse range of new planting.
- **Condition:** The condition of the habitat will be moderately improved, through planting of native species flowering plants, the addition of habitat piles in the bases of hedgerows, the addition of a compost heap and bat and bird boxes.
- **Connectivity:** will be unchanged by the project, with connectivity into the surrounding landscape being retained.
- **Aspects of ecosystem resilience** (adaptability, recovery and resistance): It is anticipated that the ecosystem of the area surrounding the site will be unaffected. Gravel boards with cut outs for small mammals will be incorporated into any sections of new fencing to ensure ecological permeability of the site.

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8 APPENDIX A - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

Plate 1 - Front view of the property.

Plate 2 - Large oak tree with PRF-1's on the woodland edge adjacent to where solar panels may be installed.

Plate 3 - Pond situated within the property grounds.

Plate 4 - Medium sized oak tree within the driveway with several PRF-1's.

Plate 5 - Southern gable end of the property.

Plate 6 - Dead tree with PRF-1's adjacent to the field where solar panels are likely to be installed.

Plate 7 - Bird nesting boxes attached to the property.

Plate 8 - Small stream running from the pond underneath the driveway showing a small mammal hole, likely rat.

Plate 9 - Gaps between the soffit and fascia where birds have been reported to have nested.

Plate 10 - Closer view of the front of the property.

Plate 11 - Rear side of the property.

Plate 12 - Inside of the stables due to be demolished with previous evidence of bird nests.

Plate 13 - Inside of the stables with previous evidence of nesting birds.

Plate 14 - Himalayan balsam (INNS) growth around the stables.

Plate 15 - Stables area at the rear of the house.

Plate 16 - Sloped meadow grassland area northwest of the property where solar panels will potentially be installed.

Plate 17 - Sloped grassland area to the northwest of the property where solar panels will potentially be installed.

Latin Name	Common Name	Taxon	Conservation Status
Acanthis cabaret	Lesser Redpoll	Birds	Priority Species
Actitis hypoleucos	Common Sandpiper	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Aegithalos caudatus	Long-tailed Tit	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Aix galericulata	Mandarin Duck	Birds	Other Species
Alauda arvensis	Skylark	Birds	Priority Species
Alcedo atthis	Kingfisher	Birds	Priority Species
Anas platyrhynchos	Mallard	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Anthus pratensis	Meadow Pipit	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Anthus trivialis	Tree Pipit	Birds	Priority Species
Apus apus	Swift	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Ardea cinerea	Grey Heron	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Branta canadensis	Canada Goose	Birds	Other Species
Chloris chloris	Greenfinch	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Chroicocephalus ridibundus	Black-headed Gull	Birds	Priority Species
Cinclus cinclus	Dipper	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Coloeus monedula	Jackdaw	Birds	Locally Important Species
Cuculus canorus	Cuckoo	Birds	Priority Species
Curruca communis	Whitethroat	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Falco tinnunculus	Kestrel	Birds	Priority Species
Gulosus aristotelis	Shag	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Hirundo rustica	Swallow	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Larus argentatus	Herring Gull	Birds	Priority Species
Larus fuscus	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Larus marinus	Great Black-backed Gull	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Linaria cannabina	Linnet	Birds	Priority Species
Milvus milvus	Red Kite	Birds	Priority Species
Motacilla cinerea	Grey Wagtail	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Oenanthe oenanthe	Wheatear	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Passer domesticus	House Sparrow	Birds	Priority Species
Phalacrocorax carbo	Cormorant	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Phoenicurus phoenicurus	Redstart	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Phylloscopus sibilatrix	Wood Warbler	Birds	Priority Species
Phylloscopus trochilus	Willow Warbler	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern

Picus viridis	Green Woodpecker	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Prunella modularis	Dunnock	Birds	Priority Species
Pyrrhula pyrrhula	Bullfinch	Birds	Priority Species
Regulus regulus	Goldcrest	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Riparia riparia	Sand Martin	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Scolopax rusticola	Woodcock	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Sturnus vulgaris	Starling	Birds	Priority Species
Troglodytes troglodytes	Wren	Birds	Locally Important Species
Turdus iliacus	Redwing	Birds	Priority Species
Turdus philomelos	Song Thrush	Birds	Priority Species
Turdus viscivorus	Mistle Thrush	Birds	Species of Conservation Concern
Tyto alba	Barn Owl	Birds	Priority Species
Amblystegium serpens	Creeping Feather-moss	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Bryum pallescens	Tall-clustered Thread-moss	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Campylopus fragilis	Brittle Swan-neck Moss	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Cephalozia curvifolia	Wood-rust	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Chionoloma tenuirostre	Narrow-fruited Crisp-moss	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Dichodontium pellucidum	Transparent Fork-moss	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Fissidens bryoides var. caespitans	Curnow's Pocket-moss	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Fissidens taxifolius	Common Pocket-moss	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Fontinalis antipyretica subsp. antipyretica	Fontinalis antipyretica subsp. antipyretica	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Heterocladium flaccidum	Heterocladium flaccidum	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Heterocladium heteropterum	Heterocladium heteropterum	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Marsupella emarginata	Notched Rustwort	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Mnium marginatum	Bordered Thyme-moss	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Orthocaulis attenuatus	Trunk Pawwort	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Oxyrrhynchium speciosum	Showy Feather-moss	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Palustriella commutata	Curled Hook-moss	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Schistidium platyphyllum	Broadleaf Grimmia	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Solenostoma paroicum	Shining Flapwort	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Tortula muralis	Wall Screw-moss	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Zygodon rupestris	Park Yoke-moss	Bryophytes	Locally Important Species
Anguilla anguilla	European Eel	Fish	Priority Species
Salmo salar	Atlantic Salmon	Fish	Priority Species
Salmo trutta	Brown/Sea Trout	Fish	Priority Species
Calopteryx virgo	Beautiful Demoiselle	Invertebrates (insect)	Locally Important Species
Coenonympha pamphilus	Small Heath	Invertebrates (insect)	Priority Species
Cordulegaster boltonii	Golden-ringed Dragonfly	Invertebrates (insect)	Locally Important Species
Dicranomyia aquosa	Dicranomyia aquosa	Invertebrates (insect)	Species of Conservation Concern

Erynnis tages	Dingy Skipper	Invertebrates (insect)	Priority Species
Euphydryas aurinia	Marsh Fritillary	Invertebrates (insect)	Priority Species
Harmonia axyridis	Harlequin Ladybird	Invertebrates (insect)	Other Species
Hipparchia semele	Grayling	Invertebrates (insect)	Priority Species
Timandra comae	Blood-vein	Invertebrates (insect)	Priority Species
Tyria jacobaeae	Cinnabar	Invertebrates (insect)	Priority Species
Arvicola amphibius	European Water Vole	Mammals (terrestrial)	Priority Species
Chiroptera	Bat	Mammals (terrestrial)	Priority Species
Erinaceus europaeus	West European Hedgehog	Mammals (terrestrial)	Priority Species
Lepus europaeus	Brown Hare	Mammals (terrestrial)	Priority Species
Lutra lutra	Eurasian Otter	Mammals (terrestrial)	Priority Species
Meles meles	Eurasian Badger	Mammals (terrestrial)	Priority Species
Muscardinus avellanarius	Hazel Dormouse	Mammals (terrestrial)	Priority Species
Mustela putorius	Polecat	Mammals (terrestrial)	Priority Species
Myotis daubentonii	Daubenton's Bat	Mammals (terrestrial)	Priority Species
Myotis nattereri	Natterer's Bat	Mammals (terrestrial)	Priority Species
Myotis	Myotis Bat species	Mammals (terrestrial)	Priority Species
Neovison vison	American Mink	Mammals (terrestrial)	Other Species
Nyctalus noctula	Noctule Bat	Mammals (terrestrial)	Priority Species
Pipistrellus pipistrellus	Common Pipistrelle	Mammals (terrestrial)	Priority Species
Pipistrellus pygmaeus	Soprano Pipistrelle	Mammals (terrestrial)	Priority Species
Pipistrellus	Pipistrelle Bat species	Mammals (terrestrial)	Priority Species
Plecotus auritus	Brown Long-eared Bat	Mammals (terrestrial)	Priority Species
Sciurus carolinensis	Eastern Grey Squirrel	Mammals (terrestrial)	Other Species
Alytes obstetricans	Midwife Toad	Reptiles and Amphibians	Other Species
Rana temporaria	Common Frog	Reptiles and Amphibians	Priority Species
Agrimonia procera	Fragrant Agrimony	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species
Alchemilla glabra	Smooth Lady's-mantle	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species

Anacamptis pyramidalis	Pyramidal Orchid	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species
Buddleja davidii	Butterfly-bush	Vascular Plants	Other Species
Callitriche platycarpa	Various-leaved Water-starwort	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species
Carex vesicaria	Bladder-sedge	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species
Cotoneaster simonsii	Himalayan Cotoneaster	Vascular Plants	Other Species
Cotoneaster	Cotoneaster	Vascular Plants	Other Species
Crocosmia pottsii x aurea = C. x crocosmiiflora	Montbretia	Vascular Plants	Other Species
Elodea canadensis	Canadian Waterweed	Vascular Plants	Other Species
Epilobium brunnescens	New Zealand Willowherb	Vascular Plants	Other Species
Fallopia japonica	Japanese Knotweed	Vascular Plants	Other Species
Fallopia sachalinensis	Giant Knotweed	Vascular Plants	Other Species
Festuca altissima	Wood Fescue	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species
Filago minima	Small Cudweed	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species
Frangula alnus	Alder Buckthorn	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species
Hyacinthoides non-scripta x hispanica = H. x massartiana	Bluebell	Vascular Plants	Other Species
Hyacinthoides non-scripta	Bluebell	Vascular Plants	Priority Species
Impatiens glandulifera	Himalayan Balsam	Vascular Plants	Other Species
Lamiastrum galeobdolon subsp. argentatum	Lamiastrum galeobdolon subsp. argentatum	Vascular Plants	Other Species
Lamiastrum galeobdolon subsp. montanum	Lamiastrum galeobdolon subsp. montanum	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species
Lathyrus linifolius	Bitter-vetch	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species
Lonicera nitida	Wilson's Honeysuckle	Vascular Plants	Other Species
Luzula multiflora subsp. congesta	Luzula multiflora subsp. congesta	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species
Luzula multiflora subsp. multiflora	Luzula multiflora subsp. multiflora	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species
Meconopsis cambrica	Welsh Poppy	Vascular Plants	Species of Conservation Concern
Osmunda regalis	Royal Fern	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species
Phegopteris connectilis	Beech Fern	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species
Polygonatum multiflorum	Solomon's-seal	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species
Potamogeton berchtoldii	Small Pondweed	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species

Prunus laurocerasus	Cherry Laurel	Vascular Plants	Other Species
Ranunculus penicillatus subsp. penicillatus	Ranunculus penicillatus subsp. penicillatus	Vascular Plants	Species of Conservation Concern
Rhododendron ponticum	Rhododendron ponticum	Vascular Plants	Other Species
Sedum album	White Stonecrop	Vascular Plants	Other Species
Symphoricarpos albus	Snowberry	Vascular Plants	Other Species
Trollius europaeus	Globeflower	Vascular Plants	Priority Species
Typha angustifolia	Lesser Bulrush	Vascular Plants	Locally Important Species
Vicia orobus	Wood Bitter-vetch	Vascular Plants	Priority Species

APPENDIX C - LEGISLATION

8.1 INTERNATIONAL

Prior to the 31st January 2020, European Union legislation required that member states designate sites for the protection of habitats and species included in the annexes of both Council Directive 92/43/EC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna (the Habitats Directive) and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (the Birds Directive). This legislation was implemented in the UK by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ("the Habitat Regulations"). This results in sites being designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas respectively (SPAs).

Following the UK's exit from the European Union on 31st January 2020, the law responsible for continuing to implement this legislation through the transition period is The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU EXIT) Regulations 2019. All legislation within the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2017 still apply within the UK under the amendment to the 2017 regulations until otherwise notified.

Working in protected sites or disturbing protected species is possible as long as consent has been issued by Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

It is possible to undertake damaging activities under the auspices of a Protected Species Licence issued by NRW which provides a derogation from the Regulations, meaning that an otherwise illegal operation carried out under licence is lawful.

8.2 NATIONAL (UK)

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) allows sites to be designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for one or all of the following categories:

- Flora;
- Fauna;
- Habitat; and
- Geological importance.

European designated sites are automatically designated as SSSIs prior to their designation.

The relevant legislation includes:

- The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales)
- Regulations 1999 (as amended);
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended);
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000;
- Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996;
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992; and
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended) requires all public bodies to have regard wherever possible to conserving biodiversity. Section 42 of the Act requires that a list of habitats and species of Principle Importance for the Conservation of Biological Diversity be produced.

8.3 NATIONAL (WALES)

8.3.1 **The Environment (Wales) Act, 2016**

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 requires that all public authorities, when carrying out their functions in Wales, seek to "maintain and enhance biodiversity" where it is within the proper exercise of their functions. In doing so, public authorities must also seek to "promote the resilience of ecosystems".

This ensures that biodiversity is an integral part of the decisions that public authorities take in relation to Wales. It also links biodiversity with the long-term health and functioning of our ecosystems, therefore helping to align the biodiversity duty with the framework for sustainable natural resource management provided in the Act.

In Wales, this legislation replaces and enhances the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) which sought to raise the profile of biodiversity and to make sure that it is considered in all local authority decisions by ensuring 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 biodiversity.".

Other elements of NERC 2006 may still apply.

8.3.2 **The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015**

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act became law in April 2015 and is concerned with improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.It will make the public bodies in Wales listed in the Act think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

To help public bodies achieve the same vision, the Act puts in place seven well-being goals. Linked to the goals a set of National Indicators are currently under development to help measure whether we are achieving the goals including the Resilient Wales goal.

Resilient Wales' goal
'A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).'

The Well-being of Future Generations Act recognises the importance of nature and its biodiversity. The resilient Wales' goal will help with nature recovery objectives in Wales.

The Act establishes a statutory Future Generations Commissioner for Wales to support the public bodies listed in the Act to work towards achieving the well-being goals. The Act also establishes Public Services Boards (PSBs) for each local authority area in Wales. PSBs are tasked with improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of its area by working to achieve the well-being goals.

Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) are tools which are used to monitor, manage and enhance those habitats and species which are of significance to an area or organisation, The United Kingdom BAP lists a number of priority habitats and species which are of conservation concern.

8.3.3 **Other**

Planning Policy Wales (Welsh Government, 2018) and Planning Policy Wales Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning (Welsh Assembly Government, September 2009) set out the protection given to wildlife (sites, habitats and species) by the planning system operational in Wales.

8.4 LOCAL AND REGIONAL

The proposed development is wholly within the City Newport Council area of responsibility. Therefore, all policies relating to biodiversity and nature conservation adopted by the Council will apply.