

Land at Mwyndy Cross, East of A4119

Talbot Green Developments Ltd

Ecological Assessment

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Appendix 3	NVC Survey (Cheshire Ecology, August 2025, Ref: CE394)
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Appendix 5	*Currently awaiting finalized Landscape Plans – to be inserted prior to final submission*

1. Introduction

1.1. Application Site Background and Proposals

1.1.1. Ecology Solutions was commissioned by the Talbot Green Developments Ltd in October 2024 to undertake an Ecological Assessment of the Land at Mwyndy Cross, East of the A4119, hereafter known as the application site.

1.1.2. The current proposals for the application site include two options for the erection of employment facility as follows:

- 1) Erection of employment facility Option 1: Erection of a Class B1c light industrial building with associated access, parking, drainage, landscaping, services and utilities
- 2) Erection of employment facility Option 2: Erection of a Class B8 data centre with associated access, parking, drainage, landscaping, services and utilities.

1.2. Application Site Characteristics

1.2.1. The application site is located approximately 1.8 km south of the town of Llantrisant and approximately 11.5km northwest of the city of Cardiff, South Wales. The application site is bounded by areas of open scrub and woodland to the north and east, with areas of existing commercial development to the south and Cefn-y-Parc Cemetery situated immediately adjacent to the application site's western boundary.

1.2.2. The application site is located within the Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), area number 147: Afon Clun Valley and Rhiwsaeson Hill. The area the application site is situated in, is allocated in the Local Development plan (LDP) policy section CS6 as a Strategic site of development for employment requirements (use B1) (Strategic Site 7: Land at Mwyndy / Talbot Green).

1.2.3. The application site predominantly comprises neutral grassland fields, with areas of scrub and is delineated by a network of hedgerows.

Ecological Assessment

1.2.4. This document assesses the ecological interest of the application site. The importance of the habitats within the application site is evaluated with due consideration given to the guidance published by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)¹.

1.2.5. The report also sets out the existing baseline conditions for the application site, setting these in the correct planning policy and legal framework and assessing

¹ CIEEM (2022). *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine*. Version 1.2 – Updated April 2022. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

any potential impacts which may occur from the proposed development. Appropriate mitigation, where necessary, is identified such that it will offset negative impacts of the proposals, and where possible, provide for the ecological enhancement of the application site, in accordance with relevant planning policy.

2. Survey Methodology

2.1. The methodology utilised for the survey work can be split into three areas, namely desk study, habitat survey and faunal survey. These are discussed in more detail below.

2.2. Desk Study

2.2.1. In order to compile background information on the application site and the surrounding area, Ecology Solutions contacted South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) in January 2025 for protected species records and recognised statutory and non-statutory designated sites.

2.2.2. Information has been provided by SEWBRc and is referenced within this report where appropriate. Due to publication conditions, the raw data received as part of the desk study exercise cannot be included as an appendix to this document; however, pertinent information regarding non-statutory designated sites is illustrated on Plan ECO1.

2.2.3. Further information on designated sites from a wider search area (including Ancient Woodland) was also obtained from the online Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)² database. This information is included at Appendix 1 and illustrated where appropriate on Plan ECO1.

2.2.4. For designated sites and priority habitats within Wales, the Welsh Government's DataMapWales³ was also reviewed, as it may provide further detail on statutory and non-statutory designations, priority habitats, and other spatial environmental data not always captured on MAGIC. This information is included at Appendix 2 and illustrated where appropriate on Plan ECO1.

2.3. Habitat Survey

2.3.1. Habitat survey work was initially undertaken in October 2024, with updated survey work undertaken in June 2025, to ascertain the general ecological value of the land contained within the boundaries of the application site and to identify the main habitats and associated plant species, with notes on fauna utilising the application site.

2.3.2. The site was surveyed based on the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) methodology⁴, as recommended by Natural Resources Wales (NRW), whereby the habitats present are identified and mapped, together with an assessment of the species composition of each habitat. This technique provides an inventory of the basic habitat types present and allows identification of areas of greater potential which require further survey. Any such areas identified can then be examined in more detail.

² <http://magic.defra.gov.uk>

³ <https://datamap.gov.wales/maps/new#/>

⁴ The UK Habitat Classification User Manual Version 2.01 at <http://www.ukhab.org/>

- 2.3.3. Using the above method, the application site was classified into areas of similar botanical community types, with a representative species list compiled for each habitat identified.
- 2.3.4. All of the species that occur in each habitat would not necessarily be detected during survey work carried out at any given time of the year, since different species are apparent at different seasons. However, given that updated survey work was undertaken at a suitable time of year, it is considered that an accurate and robust assessment of the ecological baseline has been made.
- 2.3.5. In addition, a National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey was undertaken in August 2025 (Appendix 3) to provide a more detailed assessment of the plant communities present within the site. The NVC survey enabled more precise classification of habitat types and their condition, supporting the UKHab assessment and contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the site's ecological baseline.

2.4. Faunal Survey

- 2.4.1. Obvious faunal activity recorded during the application site survey, such as birds or mammals observed visually or by call, was recorded. Specific attention was paid to any potential use of the application site by protected species, priority species or other notable species.
- 2.4.2. In addition to general observations of faunal activity, specific surveys were undertaken with regard to bats, Badgers *Meles meles*, reptiles, Hazel Dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius* and Great Crested Newts *Triturus cristatus*.

Bats

Ground-level Tree Assessment

- 2.4.3. Initial bat surveys were undertaken in October 2024, with updated survey work in June 2025, to assess the potential for roosting bats within any trees present within the boundaries of the application site. The work was undertaken by an experienced bat worker and aimed to establish the likelihood of the presence / likely absence of roosting bats within or immediately adjacent to the application site.
- 2.4.4. Field surveys were undertaken following guidelines issued by Natural England (2004⁵), the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2004⁶) and the Bat Conservation Trust (2023⁷).
- 2.4.5. All trees within the application site were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats. This was done from the ground level using binoculars to search

⁵ Mitchell-Jones, A. J. (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

⁶ Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (Eds.) (2004). *Bat Workers' Manual*. 3rd edition. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

⁷ Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

for any Potential Roost Features (PRFs) visually. Features typically favoured by bats, or evidence of past use by bats, were searched for, including:

- Obvious holes, e.g. rot holes and old Woodpecker holes;
- Dark staining on a tree below a hole;
- Tiny scratch marks around a hole from bats' claws;
- Cavities, splits and/or loose bark from broken or fallen branches, lightning strikes, etc., and
- Very dense covering of mature Ivy *Hedera helix* over the trunk.

2.4.6. Consideration was also afforded to the habitats present within and adjacent to the application site in terms of the potential opportunities that they provide for foraging and commuting bats in the local area.

Night-time Bat Walkover Surveys (NBW)

2.4.7. NBW surveys have been undertaken in Spring, Summer and Autumn 2025. The NBW survey methodology replaces the previous bat activity survey methodology that was recommended in previous survey guidelines produced by the Bat Conservation Trust. The surveyors were equipped with Echo Meter Touch 2 PRO bat detectors, with all recorded data reviewed and analysed via Kaleidoscope software.

2.4.8. Surveyors were on-site prior to sunset and stationed along potential flight lines close to any potential roost structures. The NBW survey began at sunset. Surveyors remained in position to count, observe behaviour and make recordings of any bats observed for up to an hour after sunset. If streams of commuting bats are observed, the surveyor may backtrack to move towards a roost.

2.4.9. The surveyors then began walking a transect that covered the majority of the application site with the aim of identifying any bats using the application site for foraging or dispersal. In order to maximise the encounter rate of bats (i.e. of both early- and late-emerging species), the walked transect portion of the NBW commenced around 30 to 60 minutes after sunset and continued until approximately two hours after sunset.

2.4.10. The surveyors observed the behaviour of any bat recorded, i.e. foraging or commuting, together with noting the species present and number of bats present at that location.

2.4.11. Surveys were conducted when the night-time temperature was above 10°C. The insectivorous diet of bats means there is little or no food available when the temperature falls below this level, and consequently, levels of activity are low and may not accurately reflect the value of the application site for bats. The weather conditions for the surveys were recorded, and any limitations noted.

Remote Surveys

- 2.4.12. The NBW survey was complemented by the deployment of two SM4BAT static detectors at strategic locations (see Plan ECO3) within the site to obtain longer term data on the bat usage of the site.
- 2.4.13. Remote static monitoring surveys have been undertaken monthly April to October 2025 inclusive. The purpose of these surveys is to monitor activity across a minimum of five consecutive nights on each occasion.
- 2.4.14. The detectors were programmed to record from 30 minutes before sunset until 30 minutes after sunrise and were deployed for a period of at least five consecutive nights. The recorded data has been subsequently analysed with Kaleidoscope software. The total number of bat registrations per species was then calculated to give an impression of the overall level of bat activity on a given survey night, as well as the proportion of activity attributed to a given species or group of species (*Myotis* species are not generally separated).

Badgers

- 2.4.15. The application site and immediate vicinity were subject to specific surveys for Badgers in October 2024, with updated survey work undertaken in June 2025.
- 2.4.16. The surveys comprised two main elements: firstly, searching thoroughly for evidence of Badger setts. If any setts were encountered, each sett entrance was noted and plotted, even if the entrance appeared disused. The following information was recorded where present:
- i) The number and location of well-used or very active entrances, if present; these are clear of any debris or vegetation and are obviously in regular use and may, or may not, have been excavated recently.
 - ii) The number and location of inactive entrances; these are not in regular use and have debris such as leaves and twigs in the entrance or have plants growing in or around the edge of the entrance.
 - iii) The number of disused entrances; these have not been in use for some time, are partly or completely blocked and cannot be used without considerable clearance. If the entrance has been disused for some time all that may be visible is a depression in the ground where the hole used to be, together with the remains of the spoil heap.

Secondly, any evidence of Badger activity such as well-worn paths, run-throughs, snagged hair, footprints, latrines and foraging signs was sought and if present recorded so as to build up a picture of the use of the application site by Badgers.

Reptiles

- 2.4.17. Specific surveys for reptiles were undertaken between April and October 2025 inclusive. The methodology utilised was principally derived from guidance given

in Froglife Advice Sheet 10⁸, The Herpetofauna Workers' Manual⁹, the Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland's (HGBI) advisory note and Natural England's Standing Advice for Reptiles¹⁰.

- 2.4.18. Areas of suitable habitat were surveyed for the presence of reptiles using artificial refugia ("tins"). These tins provide shelter and heat up more quickly than the surroundings in the morning and can remain warmer than the surroundings in the late afternoon. Being ectothermic (cold-blooded), reptiles use them to bask under and raise their body temperature, which allows them to forage earlier and later in the day. A total of 34 0.5m x 0.5m roofing felt tins were deployed across the application site. Their locations are shown on PLAN ECO 3.
- 2.4.19. To determine presence/likely absence, the tins are checked for reptile activity over seven visits at appropriate times of the day (avoiding the middle of the day when the ambient air temperature is at its highest) in accordance with Natural England guidance. Optimum weather conditions for reptile surveying are temperatures between 10°C and 18°C, intermittent or hazy sunshine and little or no wind.

Hazel Dormice

- 2.4.20. To ascertain the presence/likely absence of Hazel Dormice within the application site, specific survey work was undertaken between April and October 2025 inclusive, in the form of nest tube surveys.
- 2.4.21. The survey technique involved the erection of nest tubes within all areas of woodland, hedgerows and areas of dense scrub within the application site boundary. The nest tubes utilised were those approved as standard by the Mammal Society and Natural England. A total of 100 nest tubes were put up across the survey area in March 2025.
- 2.4.22. Nest tubes were placed in accordance with the guidance provided by the Mammal Society and Natural England¹¹. Typically, tubes were placed within hedgerows approximately every 10 to 15 metres where suitable locations can be identified. The nest tubes were attached with wire ties underneath suitably sturdy horizontal branches and positioned on average at approximately 1.5 metres above ground level.
- 2.4.23. The survey has been scored for effort according to the method developed from the Southwest Dormouse Project (Chanin and Woods, 2003). The system used provides an overall score that reflects the chances of Dormice being discovered if present, and thus provides an indicator of 'thoroughness' of a survey. This

⁸ Froglife (1999) *Reptile Survey: an introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation*. Froglife Advice Sheet 10. Froglife, Halesworth.

⁹ Gent, T and Gibson, S. (2003). *Herpetofauna Workers' Manual*. JNCC, Peterborough.

¹⁰ Natural England (2011). Standing Advice for Reptiles.

http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/Reptile%20feb11_tcm6-21712.pdf

¹¹ Chanin P. & Woods M. (2003). Research Report 524, 'Surveying Dormice Using Nest Tubes – Results & Experiences from the South West Dormouse Project'. English Nature, Peterborough.

score is calculated based on the number of tubes used and the number of months the tubes were in place.

2.4.24. The months of the year are weighted according to the likelihood of recording Dormice as set out below (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Monthly Score Weighting (Chanin & Woods 2003)

Month	Weighting
April	1
May	4
June	2
July	2
August	5
September	7
October	2
November	2

2.4.25. The index of effort is calculated based on the use of 50 nest tubes as a standard minimum, with less tubes used proportionately reducing the overall score and more tubes increasing the score (i.e., using 25 tubes halves the score and using 100 tubes doubles the score).

2.4.26. A score of 20 (or above) is deemed a thorough survey, and a score of 15 to 19 may be regarded as adequate where circumstances do not permit more time or more tubes, particularly if other survey methods have also proved negative.

2.4.27. The number of tubes used was 100 and they were checked on a monthly basis between April and October 2025, with August and September being the most optimal months for Dormouse surveys. This resulted in a survey effort score of 46, which is higher than the recommended density as set out in the guidelines. As such, the survey effort is considered appropriate to inform a robust assessment of the presence or absence of Dormice from the application site.

Great Crested Newts

2.4.28. The application site does not support any waterbodies which offer potential opportunities for breeding amphibians, including Great Crested Newts.

2.4.29. A review of OS mapping and aerial photography was initially undertaken to identify all waterbodies within 500 metres of the application site. Locations can be found on PLAN ECO4.

HSI Assessment

- 2.4.30. Any relevant ponds underwent a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment¹². The HSI assessment methodology involves a numerical index which identifies a score between 0 and 1, indicating the suitability of a waterbody for breeding Great Crested Newts. Each waterbody was subject to a visual assessment (where access was possible), with the feature 'scored' in relation to each of the criteria which comprise the HSI methodology.
- 2.4.31. These scores can then be used to determine pond suitability using the categorisation shown in Table 2.2 below. The intention of this method is to scope out the requirement for further specific survey work, where robustly possible.

Table 2.2: Categorisation of HSI Scores

HSI Score	Pond Suitability
<0.5	Poor
0.5 – 0.59	Below Average
0.6 – 0.69	Average
0.7 – 0.79	Good
>0.8	Excellent

eDNA Surveys

- 2.4.32. Ecology Solutions contacted the landowners of the off-site ponds to request access, with the intention of carrying out eDNA surveys to determine the presence or likely absence of Great Crested Newts.
- 2.4.33. While residing within a water body, Great Crested Newts deposit traces of DNA which can be detected through sampling the pond water and undergoing analysis within the laboratory. Pond samples can be collected between 15 April and 30 June inclusive.
- 2.4.34. Water samples of any given water body are taken in 20 separate locations, with a focus on areas of high suitability for Great Crested Newts. The samples are then pooled together into a self-supporting Whirl-Pak bag.
- 2.4.35. Once the pooled samples have been mixed thoroughly, 15ml of water is removed and transferred into an ethanol-filled test tube. This is repeated a further five times, leaving six test tubes that contain a mix of the sampled water and ethanol. These are then immediately sent to a laboratory to undergo analysis.
- 2.4.36. Within the laboratory, the samples are pooled together and tested via real-time PCR (or q-PCR) in order to amplify select parts of the DNA, allowing it to be

¹² Oldham R.S., Keeble J., Swan M.J.S. & Jeffcote M. (2000). *Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (Triturus cristatus)*. Herpetological Journal 10 (4), 143-155

detected and measured. A result of presence or absence is returned by the laboratory. If present (indicating the presence of the species), no measure of the population size is obtained through this survey method.

Refugia Survey

- 2.4.37. To supplement other survey methodologies as outlined above, refuge searches for the presence of Great Crested Newts were undertaken in conjunction with the reptile surveys. During each reptile survey visit, artificial refugia were checked for the potential presence of Great Crested Newts. As there are no aquatic habitats on site, no further GCN-specific survey methods were undertaken.

3. Ecological Features

3.1.1. A UKHab survey was undertaken within the application site by Ecology Solutions in October 2024, with updated survey work in June 2025. Additional botanical assessment was undertaken in August 2025 with a National Vegetation Classification survey of the grassland. The surveys recorded the following primary habitats:

- Other Neutral Grassland;
- Native hedgerows with Trees, associated with banks;
- Bramble Scrub;
- Tall Ruderal Vegetation; and
- Other Woodland – Broadleaved;

3.1.2. The above habitats are illustrated in Plan ECO2.

3.2. Neutral Grassland

3.2.1. Agriculturally 'improved' grassland forms the dominant habitat across the application site, comprising two large fields (F1 and F2) that show signs of agricultural improvement and variable management intensity. At the time of survey, both fields supported a mixed-height sward with limited recent grazing, and hay bales were still present in Field F2, indicating seasonal cutting.

3.2.2. Field F1 is more evidently 'improved', with a species-poor sward dominated by Perennial Ryegrass *Lolium perenne*, Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, and Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*. Other frequent species include Blackgrass *Alopecurus myosuroides*, Common Couch *Elytrigia repens*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, and occasional Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*. Forb content is limited, with scattered patches of Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, Lesser Stitchwort *Stellaria graminea*, and Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* in damper southern areas. Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* was also noted around field margins.

3.2.3. Field F2 supports a similar species assemblage, though with slightly more variation in sward structure and composition. While still dominated by Cock's-foot, Yorkshire Fog, and False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, this field contains more frequent occurrences of Sweet Vernal-grass, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Red Clover *Trifolium pratense*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, and Meadow Buttercup. Blackgrass remains present throughout. Greater forb content was noted along the southern slope, though the grassland overall remains species-poor in large areas.

3.3. Native Hedgerows with Trees Associated with Banks

3.3.1. Several native hedgerows with trees are present across the site, forming linear features along field boundaries and internal compartments. These vary in structure and composition, with some regularly coppiced and others developing into dense scrubby corridors. The hedgerows provide valuable habitat connectivity across the site, supporting a range of native woody species and

associated ground flora. Many are associated with post-and-wire fencing and display varying levels of management.

- 3.3.2. The hedgerow at the western central point (T1), and its continuation beyond the gateway (T2), is a species-rich feature comprising Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, non-native Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, and Oak *Quercus robur*, with associated Privet *Ligustrum vulgare*. Ground flora includes Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Ivy *Hedera helix*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, and in places Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*. Additional ruderal and shade-tolerant species such as Hedge Bindweed *Calystegia sepium*, Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Hart's-tongue Fern *Asplenium scolopendrium*, and Broad Buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilatata* were noted. In damper or more disturbed areas, Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, Grey Willow *Salix cinerea*, and Hop *Humulus lupulus* were also recorded.
- 3.3.3. Other internal hedgerows and field margins (T3–T7) include a mix of regularly coppiced and scrubby stretches. Species recorded include Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Wayfaring-tree *Viburnum lantana*, Hazel, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Elder *Sambucus nigra*, Ivy, Holly, Dog-rose *Rosa canina*, Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, and Oak. These hedgerows were associated with a diverse ground flora including Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Mint *Mentha* spp., Silverweed *Potentilla anserina*, Bindweed, Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*, and Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*. The southern internal boundaries and sloping sections were noted to support dense Bramble cover.
- 3.3.4. All trees recorded within the application site were reviewed from ground level for features characteristic of veteran status, such as extensive deadwood, cavities, and decay, in accordance with the definitions set out in the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024. While these Regulations apply specifically to England, they provide the most relevant and up-to-date guidance available for identifying ancient and veteran trees and are therefore considered appropriate for reference in this context. This assessment was undertaken alongside the ecological surveys to identify any trees of exceptional age or condition. Several individual trees are notably mature and of high local value; however, they do not exhibit enough of the features typically associated with veteran trees to be considered veteran. On this basis, no trees within the application site are considered to qualify as veteran.

3.4. Mixed Scrub

- 3.4.1. Several areas of mixed scrub and tall herb vegetation are present within the site, typically associated with field corners, woodland edges, and transitional zones along boundaries, including a prominent area along the eastern boundary.
- 3.4.2. These areas are dominated by Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., with frequent occurrence of Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*, and Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*. The ground flora includes Soft Rush *Juncus effusus*, Ivy *Hedera helix*, Rough Meadow-grass *Poa trivialis*, Wood

Avens Geum urbanum, Broad-leaved Willowherb *Epilobium montanum*, *Agrostis* spp. (likely Creeping Bent), and Scaly Male-fern *Dryopteris affinis*.

- 3.4.3. These areas provide valuable cover and foraging opportunities for a range of fauna. Ground conditions are variable, with some sections supporting more moisture-tolerant herbaceous species, while others remain drier and more open in character.

3.5. Other Woodland – Broadleaved

- 3.5.1. A small cluster of mature trees located in the northeast part of the site forms a semi-open woodland copse structure, with an understorey merging into surrounding scrub. This area includes mature Oak *Quercus robur* and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, with an understorey of Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Ivy, and Shield-fern *Polystichum* spp.. The herb layer is varied, including Red Campion *Silene dioica*, Common Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, Enchanter's Nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, Wood Speedwell *Veronica montana*, Fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*, Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, Bittersweet *Solanum dulcamara*, Bamboo (likely garden escape), Sandwort *Arenaria* spp., and Herb-Robert *Geranium robertianum*. This feature provides a valuable ecological niche within the site and contributes to local habitat connectivity.

- 3.5.2. The presence of several ancient woodland indicator species within this copse, including Dog's-mercury, Sanicle, and Wood Speedwell, suggests that this feature may represent a remnant of formerly more extensive semi-natural woodland. While its current extent is limited and the structure has been influenced by surrounding land use and species encroachment, the assemblage indicates a degree of ecological continuity and local importance within the landscape.

3.6. Invasive / Non-native

- 3.6.1. Several invasive non-native species (INNS) were recorded during the survey, primarily associated with hedgerows, field margins, and damp boundary areas. Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* was frequently observed, particularly along the southern and eastern margins, where it has established dense stands and poses a risk of outcompeting native vegetation. Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* was also noted within hedgerows T1 and T2, forming part of the shrub layer in shaded areas. Additionally, a small clump of Bamboo (likely a garden escape) was identified within the central woodland copse.
- 3.6.2. Several of the invasive non-native species recorded on site are listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Himalayan Balsam and Cherry Laurel are both included on Schedule 9, making it an offence to plant or otherwise cause these species to grow in the wild. While Bamboo species are not currently listed, they can exhibit invasive behaviour and should nonetheless be carefully managed to prevent further spread beyond their current extent.

Background Records

- 3.6.3. The desk study undertaken with SEWBReC returned a record from 2020 of Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, located within the application site, a species listed under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 3.6.4. SEWBReC returned multiple records of Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, a INNS listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) from within the application site. This was noted and recorded on site visits.
- 3.6.5. Several protected or notable plant species have been recorded within the wider local area. The nearest records include Bluebell and Himalayan Balsam (both approximately 50 m from site), Green-winged Orchid *Anacamptis morio* (150 m), and Unbranched Bur-reed *Sparganium emersum* (250 m). Additional records within 500 m include White Water-lily *Nymphaea alba* (400 m), Monk's-hood *Aconitum napellus* (450 m), Toothwort *Lathraea squamaria* (450 m), and Spiked Water-milfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum* (450 m).
- 3.6.6. Further records from the wider search area include Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Early Purple Orchid *Orchis mascula*, and Marsh Thistle *Cirsium palustre*, which are characteristic of species-rich marshy and neutral grassland habitats. The presence of these species indicates that the surrounding landscape supports diverse botanical communities of local conservation value, associated primarily with wetland, woodland, and unimproved grassland habitats.

4. Wildlife use of the application Site

4.1. General observations were made during the surveys of any faunal use of the application site, with specific attention paid to the potential presence of protected, priority, or otherwise notable species. Specific surveys have been completed regarding bats, Badgers, reptiles, Hazel Dormice and Great Crested Newts.

4.2. Bats

4.2.1. The ground-level appraisal identified one tree present within the application site boundary which have potential to support roosting bats. The location of this tree is illustrated on Plan ECO3.

4.2.2. Tree BRP1 is an Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, supporting multiple potential roosting features, including loose bark, dead limbs and several cavities in the form of woodpecker holes. As such, this tree was recorded as having Potential Roosting Features for Multiple bats (PRF-M).

4.2.3. No further survey work has been undertaken to date on the basis that Tree BRP1 will be retained as part of the proposed development. As the tree will not be subject to felling or significant arboricultural works, the likelihood of disturbance to any potential roosting bats is considered minimal.

NBW Surveys

4.2.4. To ascertain the general abundance of foraging and commuting bats across the application site, Ecology Solutions conducted a total of three NBW surveys in Spring, Summer, and Autumn 2025. The results of these surveys are illustrated on Plan ECO5.

4.2.5. The surveys were undertaken in favourable weather conditions where possible, with these, alongside the timings of the surveys, summarised in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1. NBW survey timings and conditions

Date	02.04.25	09.06.25	25.09.25
Survey Type	NBW	NBW	NBW
Sunset	19:45	21:30	18:58
Survey Start	19:45	21:30	19:04
Survey End	21:45	23:30	22:04
Cloud cover (%)	0	100	0
Temperature (°C)	14	18	12
Weather and Wind	Dry, very light breeze (Wind Force 1)	Showers, breezy (Wind Force 4)	Dry and Clear

4.2.1. The results of the NBW surveys completed during April, June, and September 2025 are summarised in Tables 4.2 – 4.4 below and are illustrated on Plan ECO5.

Table 4.2. NBW Survey results 02.04.25

Species	Number of Registrations	First Recording after Sunset
Common Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	93	27 mins
Soprano Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	82	53 mins
Total	175	-

Table 4.3. NBW Survey results 09.06.25

Species	Number of Registrations	First Recording after Sunset
Common Pipistrelle	141	1 min
Soprano Pipistrelle	13	24 mins
<i>Myotis</i>	1	49 mins
Total	155	-

Table 4.4. NBW Survey results 25.09.25

Species	Number of Registrations	First Recording after Sunset
Common Pipistrelle	4	73 mins
Soprano Pipistrelle	7	49 mins
Nathusius Pipistrelle	1	152 mins
Total	12	

4.2.2. The 2025 NBW surveys recorded a moderate level of bat activity which situated mostly in the northern and southern areas of the site. These areas are associated with off-site woodland (see ECO5). The registrations were dominated by Common Pipistrelle, with this species comprising 69.6% of all bat registrations. Soprano Pipistrelle, the second most abundant bat species, comprised 29.8% of all registrations. Common and Soprano Pipistrelle species calls were recorded relatively soon after sunset, which suggests that there is likely an active roost nearby to the site.

4.2.3. Myotis and Nathusius Pipistrelle were also recorded on site, albeit in significantly lower numbers (0.6%), suggesting these species were using the site for commuting.

Remote Surveys

Table 4.5. Dates of static detector monitoring periods.

Survey	Dates	Number of Static Monitoring Nights
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April 2025	02.04.25 – 09.04.25	8
May 2025	02.05.25 – 09.05.25	8
June 2025	09.06.25 – 16.06.25	8
July 2025	04.07.25 – 10.07.25	7
August 2025	01.08.25 – 09.08.25	9
September 2025	01.09.25 – 09.09.25	9
October 2025	01.10.25 – 05.10.25	5 (with faults mentioned in limitations)

4.2.4. Remote surveys were undertaken monthly, between April and October 2025 with the static detectors positioned to the north of the southern parcel (Position 1) and the northeast of the site (Position 2), with their precise locations shown on Plan ECO3. The results of the remote surveys are summarised in Tables 4.6 – 4.12 below.

Table 4.6. Results of April 2025 static detector survey (average number of registrations across the survey period).

April 2025		
Species	Static Detector Locations	
	1 (Mini 5M)	2 (Mini 12M)
Common Pipistrelle	15.00	226.00
Soprano Pipistrelle	2.63	30.88
<i>Myotis</i>	0.75	1.13
<i>Nyctalus</i>	0.13	-
Brown-Long Eared <i>Plecotus auritus</i>	-	0.38
Greater Horseshoe <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i>	-	0.25
Lesser Horseshoe <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	0.38	1.13

Table 4.7. Results of May 2025 static detector survey (average number of registrations across the survey period).

May 2025		
Species	Static Detector Locations	
	1 (Mini 17)	2 (Mini 32)
Common Pipistrelle	66.29	190.71
Soprano Pipistrelle	3.14	57.14

Nathusius Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>	0.29	0.14
<i>Nyctalus</i>	0.71	0.43
Serotine <i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	-	0.29
Myotis	0.14	0.86
Lesser Horseshoe	-	1.43

Table 4.8 Results of June 2025 static detector survey (average number of registrations across the survey period).

June 2025		
Species	Static Detector Locations	
	1 (E18)	2 (SM4-ME)
Common Pipistrelle	48.13	534.63
Soprano Pipistrelle	9.63	97.25
Nathusius Pipistrelle	-	0.88
<i>Nyctalus</i>	1.13	1.00
Serotine	0.50	0.25
Myotis	4.88	1.88
Brown-Long Eared	1.13	0.63
Lesser Horseshoe	3.25	0.50
Greater Horseshoe	-	0.13

Table 4.9. Results of July 2025 static detector survey (average number of registrations across the survey period).

July 2025 – STATICS FAILED		
Species	Static Detector Locations	
	1 (E15)	2 (SM4-X)

Table 4.10. Results of August 2025 static detector survey (average number of registrations across the survey period).

August 2025		
Species	Static Detector Locations	
	1 (MINI 44 – FAILED)	2 (MINI 39)
Common Pipistrelle	-	62.33
Soprano Pipistrelle	-	149.78
Nathusius Pipistrelle	-	0.11

Myotis	-	0.44
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Table 4.11. Results of September 2025 static detector survey (average number of registrations across the survey period).

September 2025		
Species	Static Detector Locations	
	1 (SM4 T)	2 (SM4 E15)
Common Pipistrelle	120.11	46.88
Soprano Pipistrelle	65.33	37.00
<i>Nyctalus</i>	0.18	0.5
Myotis	1.33	2.00
Brown-Long Eared	0.33	0.13
Lesser Horseshoe	0.66	0.50
Barbastelle <i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>	0.11	-

Table 4.12. Results of October 2025 static detector survey (average number of registrations across the survey period).

October 2025		
Species	Static Detector Locations	
	1 (MINI 2M)	2 (MINI 1E)
Common Pipistrelle	7.00	5.20
Soprano Pipistrelle	1.67	7.40
Myotis	1.00	1.00
Brown-Long Eared	-	0.60

4.2.1. Static detector survey work over 2025 confirms that the vast majority of activity recorded at the application site pertains to Common Pipistrelle (72%) and Soprano Pipistrelle (26.29%) These species calls are associated with both static detector locations 1 and 2, indicating that these particular species make widespread use of the site for foraging and commuting.

4.2.2. Albeit in lower numbers, particularly light-sensitive species were recorded to be using the application site, including, Barbastelle (0.007%), *Myotis* (0.8%), Brown

Long-eared (0.14%), Lesser Horseshoe (0.43%) and Greater Horseshoe bats (0.02%).

- 4.2.3. Other species recorded on site include Serotine (0.06%), *Nyctalus* species (0.23%), and Nathusius Pipistrelle (0.08%),

Analysis

- 4.2.4. Soprano and Common Pipistrelle species were recorded to be utilising the site with much higher levels of activity than any other species, with activity being associated with both static detector location 1 and 2. This suggests that these species use the site widely, utilising the hedgerows, treelines, and off-site woodland edge to forage and commute.
- 4.2.5. Species that were recorded using the site, though in much lower numbers, included *Myotis*, Serotine, Nathusius Pipistrelle, Barbastelle, *Nyctalus*, Greater and Lesser Horseshoes, and Brown Long-eared bats. These detections were distributed across both static locations, indicating occasional use for foraging and commuting, but with significantly less frequency and consistency.
- 4.2.6. *Myotis*, Barbastelle, Brown Long Eared bats, Greater and Lesser Horseshoe bats are particularly light sensitive species and have been found to modify behaviour when faced with artificially lit areas¹³. Although they are present in low numbers on the site, this sensitivity must be considered during the construction period and operational period on site via the implementation of a sensitive lighting regime. Light sensitive species were recorded at both static detector locations.

Limitations

- 4.2.7. During the October remote surveys, static detector Mini 2M experienced technical issues and recorded only three days of data rather than the planned five. Both July static detectors were subject to technical malfunction, along with August static detector Mini 44.

Background Records

- 4.2.8. The desk study undertaken with SEWBRc returned no records of bats from within the application site boundary. The nearest and most recent record of bats returned pertains to a Brown Long-eared Bat *Plecotus auritus* recorded at a location approximately 700m south of the application site, in 2011.
- 4.2.9. Records of other bat species from within the wider search area include Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, Greater Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, Lesser Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*, Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, as well as *Myotis* bat species.

¹³ The Bat Conservation Trust & The Institution of Lighting Professionals (2023). Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night, Guidance Note 08/23.

4.3. Badgers

- 4.3.1. Survey work undertaken in October 2024 identified the presence of two excavations that were considered to potentially be associated with Badgers. The location of these features is illustrated on Plan ECO3. E1 was located on the application site's central hedgerow on the south side of the hedgerow bank, with a potential tunnel extending northwards. E2 was situated nearby but on the north side of the hedge with excavation extending south.
- 4.3.2. An updated survey for Badgers was undertaken in June 2025, with the intention of undertaking further camera monitoring of the previously recorded entrances. However, the updated survey identified that these entrances were now disused, and blocked with debris and scrub. Therefore, camera monitoring was no longer necessary, so it was not undertaken. As such, it is considered that these are likely to constitute inactive and disused Badger setts.
- 4.3.3. The hedgerow bases and grassland habitats present within the application site offer suitable foraging opportunities for this species. Used pathways were noted on the southeast boundary (see Plan ECO3).

Background Records

- 4.3.4. The desk study undertaken with SEWBRc returned no record of Badger from within the application site boundary.
- 4.3.5. The nearest and most recent returned record of Badger was recorded at a location approximately 0.5km west of the application site in 2020.

4.4. Reptiles

- 4.4.1. The artificial refugia were deployed on 12 March 2025 and left to bed in until 2 April 2025 prior to the commencement of survey visits. This bedding-in period allowed sufficient time for reptiles to locate and begin using the refugia, thereby improving the reliability of subsequent survey results. The locations of all tins are shown on PLAN ECO 3.
- 4.4.2. Surveys were undertaken in accordance with established best practice guidance, including Froglife Advice Sheet 10, The Herpetofauna Workers' Manual, the HGBI Advisory Note, and Natural England's Standing Advice for Reptiles. The methodology involved the inspection of each artificial refuge during suitable weather conditions, avoiding periods of excessive heat, high wind, or heavy rainfall, to maximise the likelihood of detecting basking or sheltering reptiles.
- 4.4.3. Twelve presence / likely absence surveys for reptiles were conducted in favourable conditions in 2025. The results of the surveys are summarised in Table 4.13 below.

Table 4.13: 2025 Reptile Survey Conditions and Results

Date	Survey	Temperature (°C)	Cloud Cover (%)	Reptiles recorded
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02/04/25	1	9	55	0
09/04/25	2	11	0	0
02/05/25	3	15	60	3 Unsexed Grass Snake
09/05/25	4	18	40	1 J Grass Snake, 1 M Grass Snake, 1 F Grass Snake
20/05/25	5	18	45	1 Unsexed Grass Snake
09/06/25	6	16	95	1 M Grass Snake, 3 J Grass Snake
16/06/25	7	16	100	0
04/07/25	8	16	30	0
01/08/25	9	18	0	0
01/09/25	10	15	70	0
16/09/25	11	15	100	0
01/10/25	12	11	40	0

4.4.4. The reptile surveys identified the presence of the Grass Snake *Natrix helvetica*, no other reptile species were recorded. The locations where reptiles were recorded are shown on Plan ECO3.

4.4.5. In line with guidance¹⁴, the peak counts of Grass Snake (4 individuals) indicates that the site supports a 'Medium' population of this species.

Background Records

4.4.6. The desk study undertaken with SEWBReC returned no records of reptiles from within the application site boundary. The nearest record is for Slowworm *Anguis fragilis* located 150m north of the application site boundary.

4.4.7. Other reptiles within the wider search area include, Grass Snake *Natrix helvetica*, Adder *Vipera berus* and Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*.

4.5. Hazel Dormice

4.5.1. The hedgerows present within the application site provide suitable opportunities for Hazel Dormouse. Furthermore, these features provide connectivity to suitable habitats, including hedgerows and treelines within the wider local area.

¹⁴ Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland (1998) *Evaluating local mitigation / translocation programmes: Maintaining Best Practice and lawful standards*. HGBI advisory notes for Amphibian and Reptile Groups (ARGs). HGBI, c/o Froglife, Halesworth. Unpubl.

4.5.2. As outlined in section 2, surveys were be conducted between April and October 2025 to ascertain evidence to indicate the presence/ likely absence of Hazel Dormice. The results of the survey are outlined in Table 4.14 below.

Table 4.14: 2025 Hazel Dormice Survey Results

Date	Survey Number	Weather Conditions	Evidence of Dormice Recorded
02/04/2025	1	17°C, Sunny, moderate breeze	No Evidence
02/05/2025	2	15°C, Sunny spells, light breeze	No Evidence
09/06/2025	3	16°C, Cloudy	No Evidence
04/07/2025	4	16°C, Light cloud	No Evidence
01/08/2025	5	18°C, Sunny	No Evidence
09/09/2025	6	18°C, Light rain	No Evidence
01/10/2025	7	12°C, Light Cloud	No Evidence

4.5.3. Surveys did not confirm the presence of Hazel Dormouse within the application site, with no confirmed nests observed during the surveys. The survey effort met the recommended threshold set out in the Dormouse Conservation Handbook (English Nature, 2006), providing sufficient confidence in the conclusion of likely absence from the site.

Background Records

4.5.4. The desk study undertaken with SEWBReC returned no records of Hazel Dormouse from within the application site.

4.5.5. The desk study returned a record of a Hazel Dormouse sighting at a location approximately 1.2km north of the application site, from 1998 and can be considered historic. The nearest record after the year 2000 was a sighting in 2020, 2.2 km to the south.

4.6. Amphibians (Great Crested Newt)

4.6.1. The application site does not support any aquatic features suitable for use by breeding amphibians, including Great Crested Newts (GCN). However, the terrestrial habitats present within the site are considered suitable for amphibians during their terrestrial life stage. The marshy area located to the north of the site

lies within the river's floodplain and is not considered optimal breeding habitat for GCN; however, any seasonal or ephemeral ponds that form within this area could potentially be utilised by the species.

- 4.6.2. A review of Ordnance Survey mapping identified a total of 2 off-site ponds and ditches located within 500 metres of the application and infill site boundary.
- 4.6.3. Access was not granted to conduct HSI assessments or eDNA testing of off-site ponds P1 or P2, all situated within 250 metres of the application site boundary.
- 4.6.4. Table 4.15 below notes the distance of these features from the application site, with the locations of each of these waterbodies illustrated on Plan ECO4.

Table 4.15: Location of off-site waterbodies

Pond Reference	Location Relative to Application Site
P1	c. 200 metres South
P2	c. 310 metres South

- 4.6.5. No GCN were discovered during reptile survey refugia checks. It is acknowledged that this, in itself, does not indicate an absence of the species on site.
- 4.6.6. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken for the adjacent development site to the south confirmed the absence of GCN within the wider area.¹⁵ This provides further supporting evidence that the species is unlikely to be present within the application site or its immediate surroundings.

Background Records

- 4.6.7. The desk study undertaken with SEWBRc did not return any records of amphibian species from within or immediately adjacent to the application site boundary.
- 4.6.8. The nearest returned record of amphibians is for a Common Frog *Rana temporaria* recorded at a location 0.5km north of the application site, from 2014.
- 4.6.9. The nearest record of Great Crested Newt was recorded at a location 0.9km southeast of the application site, from 2004.

4.7. Birds

- 4.7.1. The hedgerows and trees within the application site provide potential opportunities for nesting birds, including common and widespread species associated with farmland and edge habitats. The improved and regularly managed grassland that comprises the majority of the site offers limited structural diversity and is therefore considered suboptimal for ground-nesting species such as Skylark *Alauda arvensis* and Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, which

¹⁵ A4119 Pontyclun Wales - Ecological Impact Assessment (Sweco UK Limited, Feb 25, Ref: 65209840-001-SWE-XX-XX-T-J-0005)

typically favour larger expanses of semi-improved or arable land with suitable sward height and minimal disturbance. While no targeted breeding bird surveys were undertaken, the habitats present are expected to support a typical assemblage of farmland and hedgerow species, including species such as Dunnock *Prunella modularis*, Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, and Blackbird *Turdus merula*. Precautionary measures should therefore be adopted to avoid impacts on any nesting birds potentially using the site.

Background Records

- 4.7.2. The desk study undertaken with SEWBrEC did not return any records of protected or notable bird species from within or immediately adjacent to the application site boundary.
- 4.7.3. The nearest non-historical returned records of a protected bird species, a Linnet *Linaria cannabina* was recorded at a location approximately 850m west of the application site, from 2020.

4.8. **Invertebrates**

- 4.8.1. The habitats within the application site, comprising predominantly improved or regularly managed grassland with hedgerows, scattered trees and narrow field margins, are expected to support a range of common and widespread invertebrate species typical of farmland edge environments, including pollinators such as bees, butterflies and hoverflies. Structural diversity and the availability of nectar and larval resources are limited across much of the site, so the potential to support notable invertebrate assemblages is considered low.
- 4.8.2. Localised features such as flowering hedgerow margins, bramble and ruderal patches, and small damp areas may provide some increased value for invertebrates at a microhabitat level. Although no targeted invertebrate surveys were undertaken, the overall habitat quality suggests that any assemblage present is likely to be typical of the wider agricultural landscape rather than of high conservation significance.

Background records

- 4.8.3. The desk study undertaken with SEWBrEC returned no invertebrate records from within the application site boundary. The nearest records comprise Brown-banded Carder Bee *Bombus humilis* and Grass Rivulet *Perizoma albulata*, recorded approximately 200 m west of the site in 2021 and 2024 respectively. Although not legally protected, both species are listed as Priority Species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).
- 4.8.4. These records are associated with Cefn y Parc Cemetery, which supports more structurally diverse and extensively managed grassland habitats than those present within the application site. Given the difference in habitat type and management regime, it is considered unlikely that the application site provides suitable conditions to support these or other notable invertebrate species.

5. Ecological Evaluation

5.1. The Principles of Ecological Evaluation

- 5.1.1. The guidelines for ecological evaluation produced by CIEEM propose an approach that involves professional judgement, but makes use of available guidance and information, such as the distribution and status of the species or features within the locality of the project.
- 5.1.2. The methods and standards for site evaluation within the British Isles have remained those defined by Ratcliffe¹⁶. These are broadly used across the United Kingdom to rank sites so priorities for nature conservation can be attained. For example, the current Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designation maintains a system of data analysis that is roughly tested against Ratcliffe's criteria.
- 5.1.3. In general terms, these criteria are size, diversity, naturalness, rarity and fragility, while additional secondary criteria of typicalness, potential value, intrinsic appeal, recorded history and the position within the ecological / geographical units are also incorporated into the ranking procedure.
- 5.1.4. Any assessment should not judge sites in isolation from others, since several habitats may combine to make it worthy of importance to nature conservation.
- 5.1.5. Further, relying on the national criteria would undoubtedly distort the local variation in assessment and therefore additional factors need to be taken into account, e.g. a woodland type with a comparatively poor species diversity, common in the south of England, may be of importance at its northern limits, say in the border country.
- 5.1.6. In addition, habitats of local importance are often highlighted within a local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).
- 5.1.7. Levels of importance can be determined within a defined geographical context from the immediate site or locality through to the international level.
- 5.1.8. The legislative and planning policy context is also an important consideration and has been given due regard throughout this assessment.

5.2. Habitat Evaluation

Designated Sites

- 5.2.1. **Statutory Sites.** The application site does not fall within and is not adjacent to any statutory designated sites (see Plan ECO1).

¹⁶ Ratcliffe, D A (1977). *A Nature Conservation Review: the Selection of Biological Sites of National Importance to Nature Conservation in Britain*. Two Volumes. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

- 5.2.2. The nearest statutory designated site is Brofiscin Quarry Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), located approximately 1.6 km to the southeast of the application site at its closest point (straight-line distance; see Plan ECO1). Brofiscin Quarry SSSI is designated solely for its geological features and holds no ecological or biodiversity-related conservation interest (see Appendix 3).
- 5.2.3. The application site lies within a predominantly agricultural and urbanised landscape and is separated from the SSSI by intervening areas of development, farmland, and public highways. There are no known direct hydrological connections between the application site and Brofiscin Quarry SSSI, and no surface water features were observed that would suggest a clear pathway for potential pollutants or sediment transfer.
- 5.2.4. Potential indirect effects during construction, such as dust deposition, noise, or contaminated run-off, will be controlled through the implementation of standard construction best practice and site management measures, to be detailed within a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). With these measures in place, significant adverse effects on Brofiscin Quarry SSSI or other statutory designated sites are not anticipated.
- 5.2.5. **Non-statutory Sites.** The application site is located within the Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), area number 147: Afon Clun Valley and Rhiwsaeson Hill.
- 5.2.6. This SINC was designated for its diverse mosaic of high-quality habitats and associated species. It includes the central section of the Afon Clun valley, which supports a meandering, fast-flowing river with excellent Otter *Lutra lutra* habitat, important fish populations, and notable bird species such as Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*, Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, and Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*. The river is lined by ancient and wet woodland featuring Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, Oak *Quercus* spp., and Hazel *Corylus avellana*, with species-rich ground flora including Monk's-hood *Aconitum napellus*.
- 5.2.7. The adjacent floodplain supports extensive marshy grassland and swamp habitats, including high-quality Purple Moor-grass and Rush Pasture (M23–M25), alongside unimproved and semi-improved neutral grassland (MG5–MG6). These areas are botanically rich, supporting a wide range of characteristic species such as Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Marsh Thistle *Cirsium palustre*, and Early Purple Orchid *Orchis mascula*.
- 5.2.8. Rhiwsaeson Hill contributes further ecological value with semi-natural woodland, Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, and scrub, providing high Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* potential and supporting a connected habitat network. Species of note include Marsh Fritillary *Euphydryas aurinia*, Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius*, Badger *Meles meles*, and several bat species.
- 5.2.9. While the application site sits within a SINC, the area is allocated in the Local Development plan (LDP) policy section CS6 as a Strategic site of development for employment requirements (use B1) (Strategic Site 7: Land at Mwyndy / Talbot Green).

- 5.2.10. It is also worth noting that while the application site is within a SINC, site surveys during 2025 have confirmed that it no longer contains the high-quality grassland habitats for which the SINC is designated as a non-statutory site. This is likely to be a consequence of modern farming techniques, such as use of selective herbicides and artificial fertiliser which reduces botanical diversity. The land adjacent to the north of the site displays significantly higher quality habitats and species diversity.
- 5.2.11. The SINC to the west (Area 151: Cefn Parc Cemetery) contains unimproved neutral grassland (MG5), supporting a classic species-rich hay-meadow flora with *Primula veris*, *Centaurea nigra*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Briza media* and *Knautia arvensis*. It is the only site in the County Borough for *Anacamptis morio* and among few for *Ophioglossum vulgatum*. The site also supports *Callistege mi* and a diverse waxcap (*Hygrocybe spp.*) assemblage, reflecting high ecological value and habitat continuity.
- 5.2.12. Area 151, Cefn Parc Cemetery, displays notably valuable habitat and flora and is objectively different from the proposed application site.

Ancient Woodland

- 5.2.13. The desk study results showed no areas of designated Ancient Woodland situated within or immediately adjacent to the application site, although several areas are present within the wider local area, as illustrated on Plan ECO1. However, it is acknowledged that the MAGIC dataset used to identify Ancient Woodland is limited in accuracy and does not consistently map woodland parcels smaller than 2 ha. As such, small fragments of ancient or long-established woodland may not be formally recognised within this dataset.
- 5.2.14. Bluebell and Sanicle were recorded within the application site during the botanical surveys, both of which are recognised as Ancient Woodland Indicator Species. In addition, review of the First Edition Ordnance Survey (Glamorgan Sheet XLII, surveyed 1874–1878, published 1885) indicates that a small copse was historically present within the site boundary. This suggests that parts of the existing tree cover may represent remnants of historically wooded land..
- 5.2.15. On this basis, while there is no formally recorded Ancient Woodland within or immediately adjoining the site, the areas of woodland should be retained and protected through sensitive site design and avoidance of disturbance to mature trees and associated ground flora. The plant species recorded in the woodland indicates that the on-site woodlands may be Ancient Woodland.

Habitats

- 5.2.16. As illustrated on Plan ECO2 and described above, the application site is predominantly comprised of grassland fields, in addition to a network of hedgerows and trees.
- 5.2.17. The grassland fields support a limited complement of botanical species, all of which are common and widespread in both a national and local context. As a result, the ecological value of this habitat is considered to be low, both in terms

of its inherent diversity and also the opportunities that it provides for protected and notable faunal species.

- 5.2.18. A National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey undertaken in August 2025 confirmed that the grassland within the application site comprises a mix of acid and neutral grassland communities. The majority of Field A and the southern part of Field B were classified as U4b *Holcus lanatus*–*Trifolium repens* sub-community of *Festuca ovina*–*Agrostis capillaris*–*Galium saxatile* grassland, while the northern part of Field B supported MG1 *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland. These communities are widespread and typical of unmanaged or previously improved pasture and were found to have a relatively low goodness-of-fit within the NVC analysis, indicating a community of limited ecological distinctiveness.
- 5.2.19. The sward was recorded as being species-poor, with *Trifolium repens* absent, *T. pratense* recorded only once, and *Cynosurus cristatus* (a key indicator of higher-value mesotrophic grassland) absent from all samples. The NVC report confirmed that the grassland is not representative of MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus*–*Centaurea nigra* grassland and does not qualify as a Priority Habitat under UKHab criteria due to its low species richness and limited forb cover. These findings therefore support the conclusion that the grassland across the site is of low ecological value.
- 5.2.20. Habitats of comparatively greater ecological value in the context of the application site include hedgerows and trees. These habitats comprise a range of native species and also provide potential opportunities for faunal groups such as bats and birds.
- 5.2.21. As illustrated on the draft Landscape Strategy (see Appendix 4), the vast majority of hedgerows and trees will be fully retained under the proposed development. Measures will be undertaken to protect retained hedgerows and trees throughout the construction phase, including the use of temporary protective fencing (Heras or equivalent), sensitive storage of materials away from retained habitats and measures to mitigate for potential damage from dust and surface water run-off. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be prepared prior to commencement of works on site.
- 5.2.22. Only minor losses are proposed in the form of narrow breaks to facilitate access. Detailed consideration has been afforded to the locations of these breaks, to ensure that losses to trees are minimised and that impacts to ecological, arboricultural and landscape features are kept to a minimum.
- 5.2.23. In conclusion, whilst the development proposals will necessarily result in losses to some of the existing habitats, it is considered that the retention and enhancement of the existing hedgerows and the provision of new species rich habitats within the application site will mitigate for habitat losses and deliver some compensation and enhancements compared to the existing situation at the application site.

5.3. Faunal Evaluation

Bats

- 5.3.1. **Legislation.** All bats are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and included on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ("the Habitats Regulations"). These include provisions making it an offence to:
- Deliberately kill, injure or take (capture) bats;
 - Deliberately disturb bats in such a way as to:-
 - be likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or rear or nurture their young; or to hibernate or migrate; or
 - affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;
 - To damage or destroy any breeding or resting place used by bats; and
 - Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter or protection (even if bats are not in residence).
- 5.3.2. The words deliberately and intentionally include actions where a court can infer that the defendant knew that the action taken would almost inevitably result in an offence, even if that was not the primary purpose of the act.
- 5.3.3. The offence of damaging (making it worse for the bat) or destroying a breeding site or resting place is an absolute offence. Such actions do not have to be deliberate for an offence to be committed.
- 5.3.4. In accordance with the Habitats Regulations the licensing authority (Natural Resources Wales) must apply the three derogation tests as part of the process of considering a licence application. These tests are that:
1. the activity to be licensed must be for imperative reasons of overriding public interest or for public health and safety;
 2. there must be no satisfactory alternative; and
 3. the favourable conservation status of the species concerned must be maintained.
- 5.3.5. Licences can usually only be granted if the development is in receipt of full planning permission.
- 5.3.6. **Application Site Usage.** As outlined above, a mature Ash tree is considered to have Potential Roosting Features for multiple bats due to loose bark, dead limbs and several cavities in the form of woodpecker holes. The location of this tree is shown on ECO3.
- 5.3.7. The hedgerows associated with the boundaries of the application site offer potential opportunities for foraging and commuting bats in the local area. However, the grassland that comprises the vast majority of the application site currently provides limited opportunities for this group.

- 5.3.8. Bat activity survey work undertaken at the site identified that a range of bat species currently use the habitats present for foraging and commuting. Additionally, Pipistrelle registrations recorded in early evening suggest there may be a nearby roost. The vast majority of activity recorded pertains to Pipistrelle species. Survey work also identified the usage of the application site by more light-sensitive species, including Barbastelle, *Myotis*, Brown Long-eared, Lesser Horseshoe and Greater Horseshoe bats, albeit in far lower numbers.
- 5.3.9. As stated in the methodology section, during the October remote surveys, static detector Mini 2M experienced technical issues and recorded only three days of data rather than the planned five. Additionally, both July static detectors were subject to technical malfunction, along with August static detector Mini 44. Although this limits the amount of data available regarding the usage of the application site by bats during the summer season, given that many other static surveys took place, along with three full NBW surveys, it is considered that an accurate assessment on the use of the application site by bats can still be made.
- 5.3.10. **Avoidance, Mitigation and Enhancements.** Under the development proposals, the tree identified to have potential to support roosting bats is expected to be retained. If so, the existing opportunities that it provides for roosting bats will continue post-development. Final Landscaping drawings had not been completed at the time of completing this report.
- 5.3.11. However, consideration has been afforded to works that could be required in the future, should arboricultural management of these features be required (e.g. during long-term management).
- 5.3.12. With regard to the tree identified as having PRF-M bat roosting potential, further survey work in the form of three aerial inspections or emergence surveys would be required if future management works are necessary, and prior to felling. The surveys would need to be undertaken by a suitably qualified and licensed ecologist.
- 5.3.13. Although final Landscaping drawings had not been completed at the time of completing this report, the draft proposals will retain existing boundary habitats such as hedgerows, scrub and rough grass margins, which are the primary habitats used by foraging and commuting bats. The grassland areas which will be lost to development are of lower value to bats.
- 5.3.14. It is recommended that new species-rich habitats are planted on the application site post-development, such as meadow grassland, hedgerows, trees or wetland habitats to provide an enhancement in the diversity of habitats present compared to the existing situation, both in terms of structure and botanical diversity. This will improve invertebrate prey density and abundance for bats.
- 5.3.15. Given that survey work has identified that light-sensitive bat species use the application site for foraging and commuting, a sensitive lighting strategy will be required to ensure that dark corridors are maintained. This will be prepared

following Bats and Artificial Lighting guidance published by the Institute of Lighting Professionals¹⁷, or as superseded.

5.3.16. A detailed lighting strategy will be developed prior to commencement of development by a suitably qualified and experience lighting engineer, in conjunction with an ecologist. The strategy will adopt the following principles, particularly where lighting is required in close proximity to any new or retained semi-natural habitats and green corridors:

- Minimising the installation of new lighting to ensure that it is used only in areas where it is required, and that dark corridors are identified and maintained;
- The use of LED luminaires, which have a sharp cut-off, lower intensity, good colour rendition and dimming capability, mounted on the horizontal to avoid any upward tilt; and
- Restricting lighting columns to the lowest acceptable height and the use of measures such as hoods, cowls, and louvres, to minimise light spill and to direct lighting only to where it is required, and limiting the number of lighting columns to the minimum required to achieve the requisite safe lighting level.

5.3.17. Particular consideration is likely to be required for locations where the proposals will result in breaks to existing linear features such as hedgerows, to minimise the potential for light spill into adjoining habitats.

5.3.18. Subject to the adoption of measures such as those noted above, it is considered that existing dark corridors and key navigational routes for foraging and commuting bats at the application site can be retained post-development.

5.3.19. As an enhancement for roosting bats in the local area, ten new bat boxes will be provided on suitably mature retained trees at the application site. It is recommended that Wildcare Crevice Bat Box (or similar equivalent) boxes are provided on the basis of their suitability for the species recorded during survey work and that they do not require regular maintenance.

5.3.20. Boxes should be installed at a suitable height (at least 4 metres above ground where safe installation is possible) to prevent potential disturbance from cats and vandals, and in locations away from any artificial light sources. Boxes will be made of durable materials such as woodcrete, not wood.

Badgers

5.3.21. **Legislation.** The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 consolidates previous legislation (the Badgers Acts of 1973 and 1991) and provides protection to Badgers and their setts primarily to prevent persecution rather than as a conservation measure.

¹⁷ Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night, Guidance Note 08/23, Institute of Lighting Professionals.

- 5.3.22. The Act makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure, take, or attempt to take a Badger, or to cruelly ill-treat a Badger. It is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a Badger sett, or to disturb a Badger while it is occupying a sett. A sett is defined as "any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a Badger", with 'current use' generally considered to be any use within the preceding 12 months.
- 5.3.23. In Wales, guidance provided by Natural Resources Wales (Badgers: A Guide for Developers, 2023) sets out how potential impacts on Badgers should be assessed and managed during development. The guidance outlines the types of activities likely to require a licence and the circumstances under which development may proceed in proximity to active setts.
- 5.3.24. Local Planning Authorities in Wales must consult Natural Resources Wales on any application likely to adversely affect Badgers or their setts. Any work that may disturb Badgers or damage, destroy or obstruct access to a sett is illegal without a licence issued by Natural Resources Wales under the 1992 Act. Such licences may be granted for development purposes, including for sett closure, exclusion or destruction, provided that suitable mitigation and timing measures are in place to avoid harm to the species.
- 5.3.25. **Application Site Usage.** Two single entrance disused Badger setts were recorded on the applications site (see Plan ECO3).
- 5.3.26. The habitats present within the site offer some suitable sett-building and foraging opportunities for this species.
- 5.3.27. Owing to the dynamic nature of this species, it cannot be ruled out that Badgers may become present on site at a later date.
- 5.3.28. **Mitigation and Enhancement Measures.** It is recommended that a Badger sett check is carried out prior to the commencement of development as a precaution to ensure that no new setts have been excavated since the surveys.
- 5.3.29. Given the potential for Badgers to be within the vicinity of the application site and potentially entering site during the construction phase, a number of precautionary measures should be put in place throughout the construction phase of the development. These will include:
- During the construction process all dug ground should be levelled and compacted wherever possible. This will prevent Badgers from attempting to excavate setts prior to completion of the works;
 - Planks should be left in any uncovered trenches to allow any Badger that may stray onto the site an escape route;
 - Any open trenches will be checked at the beginning of each day (to ensure that Badgers are not present) and at the end of each day (to ensure that the means of escape remain in place);
 - Tools and loose materials will be stored in an appropriate container to reduce the risk of Badgers accessing the site and injuring themselves;

- Materials should be stored in a storage container in order to avoid the chance of Badgers coming onto site and potentially injuring themselves;
- Fires and chemicals should not be used; and
- Any open pipework greater than 150mm outside diameter should be blanked off at the end of each working day.

5.3.30. Badgers are an especially mobile species that often extend existing setts and excavate new ones in areas of suitable habitat. New setts may be excavated within the construction zone during the period between the survey work undertaken and the drafting of this report and the commencement of site clearance and construction works. Were construction to proceed directly, involving the use of heavy machinery, newly excavated setts or entrances may be adversely affected, leading to collapse of entrances and tunnels and possible Badger injury or mortality.

5.3.31. If any suspected Badger activity is observed during construction, the project's ecological consultancy should be contacted.

5.3.32. Badgers can roam into areas where construction is underway and become trapped in trenches and / or excavate new setts in piles of subsoil or disturb chemicals that may be being used for development. Regular monitoring and professional ecological guidance are essential to address any issues promptly and legally.

5.3.33. Ensure that any trenches or excavations are covered or fitted with escape ramps at the end of each working day to prevent Badgers from becoming trapped. Avoid leaving piles of subsoil unattended for long periods, as Badgers may attempt to create new setts. If subsoil must be piled up, inspect the piles regularly and, if necessary, fence them off to prevent Badgers from accessing them.

Reptiles

5.3.34. **Legislation.** All six British reptile species receive a degree of legislative protection that varies depending on their conservation importance.

5.3.35. Rare, endangered or declining species receive 'full protection' under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) as well as protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Species that are fully protected are Smooth Snake *Coronella austriaca* and Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis*. These receive the following protection from:

- Killing, injuring and taking;
- Possession or control (of live or dead animals, their parts or derivatives);
- Damage to, destruction of and obstruction of access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection;
- Disturbance of any animal occupying such a structure or place; and
- Selling, offering for sale, possession or transport for purposes of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative).

5.3.36. Owing to their abundance in Britain, Common Lizard, Slow Worm, Grass Snake and Adder *Vipera berus* are only 'partially protected' under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and as such only receive protection from:

- Deliberate killing and injuring; and
- Being sold or other forms of trading.

5.3.37. Therefore, if reptiles are present within a site, a scheme of translocation can be implemented to avoid the offence of killing / injury.

5.3.38. **Application Site Usage.** Surveys undertaken between April and October 2025 confirmed the presence of a medium population of Grass Snake. Reptiles were recorded during multiple survey visits, with a peak count of four individuals. No other reptile species were recorded. The habitats within the application site provide suitable opportunities for this species, particularly in areas of rough grassland and boundary vegetation that offer cover, basking sites and foraging potential. The more intensively managed grassland areas are considered to be of lower suitability for reptiles overall.

5.3.39. **Mitigation and Enhancement Measures.** To safeguard the Grass Snake population recorded within the application site, a precautionary approach to vegetation clearance will be implemented. Works will be undertaken during the reptile active season (typically March to October inclusive) and under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist. Vegetation will be reduced in height gradually, starting with a two-stage cut, to encourage reptiles to disperse naturally from working areas into retained suitable habitat.

5.3.40. Existing boundary habitats such as hedgerows, scrub and rough grass margins will be retained and protected to maintain habitat connectivity and provide continued opportunities for foraging and shelter. Refugia features, including log and brash piles, will be incorporated within retained habitat areas, and their inclusion will be shown on the construction drawings to ensure implementation. The precise locations of these features are indicated on the draft Landscape Plan provided in Appendix 4. These measures, together with the retention of suitable boundary habitats, will ensure that opportunities for reptiles are maintained within the site following development.

Hazel Dormice

5.3.41. **Legislation.** The Hazel or Common Dormouse is a scarce UK species that is protected under European and UK law by virtue of its inclusion on:

- Appendix 3 of the Bonn Convention;
- Annex IVa of the EC Habitats Directive;
- Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended); and
- Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

- 5.3.42. Dormice are afforded the same level as protection as bat species, both in terms of individual animals and also the habitats which they inhabit.
- 5.3.43. **Application Site Usage.** Survey work undertaken between April and October 2025 did not confirm the presence of Hazel Dormouse within the application site, with no nests or other field signs recorded during any of the survey visits. The hedgerows present across the site provide potentially suitable habitat for this species, offering foraging, nesting, and dispersal opportunities, and also form part of a wider network of connected woody vegetation within the surrounding landscape.
- 5.3.44. Although the surveys indicate a likely absence of Dormouse within the site, the presence of suitable habitat and the proximity of historic records within the wider area mean that occasional use of the site by individuals moving through the local habitat network cannot be entirely ruled out.
- 5.3.45. **Avoidance, Mitigation and Enhancement.** As the presence of Hazel Dormouse was not confirmed during the 2025 survey work, a precautionary approach will be adopted during any vegetation clearance works. All hedgerows and areas of dense scrub will be retained wherever possible and safeguarded throughout the construction phase through the use of protective fencing and sensitive working practices to prevent accidental damage.
- 5.3.46. Where minor vegetation removal is required to facilitate access or construction, this will be undertaken outside of the Dormouse breeding season (May–September inclusive) and under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist. Clearance will be carried out in a staged manner, gradually reducing vegetation height to allow any small mammals present to disperse naturally into retained habitat.
- 5.3.47. Post-development, the retained hedgerows will be supplemented with native infill planting to strengthen connectivity across the site. The proposed landscaping scheme will also introduce new native scrub and tree planting, which will provide additional foraging and nesting opportunities for Dormouse and enhance the overall ecological connectivity of the site.

Birds

- 5.3.48. **Legislation.** Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is concerned with the protection of wild birds, whilst Schedule 1 lists species which are protected by special penalties.
- 5.3.49. **Application Site Usage** The application site offers some limited opportunities for nesting and foraging birds in the form of hedgerows and trees. However, the managed grassland which comprises the majority of the application site offers few opportunities for this group.
- 5.3.50. **Avoidance, Mitigation and Enhancements.** As all species of birds receive general protection whilst nesting, clearance of any suitable nesting habitats should be undertaken outside of the main bird breeding season (March to July inclusive).

- 5.3.51. Should this not be possible, potential nesting habitat will be subject to a nesting bird check by an experienced ecologist immediately prior to its removal. Should any nesting birds be identified, then the nest should be fully safeguarded *in situ* and subject to an appropriate disturbance buffer (as advised by the ecologist), and only removed once it has been confirmed all fledglings have left the nest and it is no longer active.
- 5.3.52. The new planting within the application site will use seed- and berry-bearing species to provide enhanced foraging opportunities for birds once established. The creation of new habitats within the application site boundary will represent a clear benefit to birds compared to the existing baseline conditions.
- 5.3.53. To provide new nesting opportunities, at least 20 bird nesting boxes will be installed throughout the application site. A range of box types will be used, including hole-fronted and open-fronted designs, to cater for a variety of species. Boxes will be made of durable materials, not wood. All nest boxes will be positioned out of direct sunlight and out of reach of predators, particularly cats, at locations agreed by a suitably qualified ecologist. The inclusion of bird boxes will be shown on the construction drawings to ensure delivery, with the proposed locations indicated on the draft Landscape Plan provided in Appendix 4. Final Landscaping drawings had not been completed at the time of completing this report,
- 5.3.54. Four Impeckable 'Swift Eight Chamber Nest Boxes'¹⁸ will be installed on north or east facing elevations of the new building, a minimum of 5m above ground level, with a direct fall underneath. Impeckable boxes can be factory painted to colour match the building.

Great Crested Newts

- 5.3.55. **Legislation.** The Great Crested Newt is afforded full protection under both domestic and European legislation. The species is listed on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 5.3.56. Under these provisions, it is an offence to:
- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a Great Crested Newt;
 - Deliberately disturb a Great Crested Newt in such a way as to be likely to impair its ability to survive, breed, rear or nurture its young, hibernate or migrate, or to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species;
 - Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place used by Great Crested Newts; and
 - Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection.

¹⁸ <https://www.swiftnestboxes.co.uk>

- 5.3.57. Where impacts on this species or its habitats cannot be avoided, activities may only proceed under a European Protected Species (EPS) licence issued by Natural Resources Wales (NRW), provided that the three derogation tests are satisfied. These require that:
- The activity is for reasons of overriding public interest (including social or economic);
 - There is no satisfactory alternative; and
 - The action will maintain the species at a favourable conservation status in its natural range.
- 5.3.58. Any works likely to affect Great Crested Newts or their terrestrial or aquatic habitats must therefore be undertaken in full compliance with this legislation.
- 5.3.59. **Application Site Usage.** The application site does not contain any aquatic habitats suitable for breeding amphibians, including Great Crested Newt. The terrestrial habitats present, comprising grassland, scrub, and hedgerows, provide some limited potential for foraging and dispersal, although these are relatively isolated and of suboptimal quality.
- 5.3.60. A review of Ordnance Survey mapping identified two off-site ponds located within 500 metres of the application site boundary. Access was not granted to undertake Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessments or eDNA sampling of these waterbodies; however, both lie to the south of the site within an area of existing development. Furthermore, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the adjacent site to the south confirmed the likely absence of Great Crested Newt within the wider area.
- 5.3.61. No newts were observed during the reptile refugia checks, which included targeted inspections for amphibians. Based on the absence of suitable aquatic features, limited terrestrial habitat, and negative findings from nearby surveys, it is considered unlikely that Great Crested Newts are present within the application site or its immediate surroundings.
- 5.3.62. **Avoidance, Mitigation and Enhancements.** Although Great Crested Newt is considered likely to be absent from the application site, precautionary measures will be adopted during site preparation and construction to ensure that any unexpected individuals are safeguarded. Vegetation clearance and ground works will be undertaken during suitable weather conditions (i.e. when temperatures are above 5°C and conditions are dry) and under an ecological watching brief where appropriate.
- 5.3.63. Any excavations, such as trenches or foundation pits, will be covered overnight or fitted with escape ramps to prevent the entrapment of amphibians or other fauna. Materials such as topsoil and construction debris will be stored on raised platforms or within sealed containers to prevent animals from seeking refuge within them. The inclusion of these measures will be detailed on the construction drawings to ensure implementation.
- 5.3.64. The proposed draft landscaping scheme incorporates areas of species-rich grassland, native scrub, and wetland planting, providing an enhanced terrestrial

resource suitable for use by amphibians in the long term. The design and layout of these habitats are shown on the draft Landscape Plan provided in Appendix 4. However, final Landscaping drawings had not been completed at the time of completing this report, Drainage design will also take account of amphibian movement and safety. Gully pots will be avoided in proximity to areas of amphibian habitat wherever possible; where their use is unavoidable, amphibian ladders will be installed, and wildlife kerbs incorporated, to prevent entrapment and ensure safe passage. Collectively, these measures will ensure that the development avoids adverse effects on Great Crested Newt and other small fauna while contributing positively to habitat quality within the completed site.

6. Planning Policy Context

6.1. The planning policy that relates to nature conservation in Rhondda Cynon Taf County is issued at two main administrative levels: nationally through Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 5; and at the local level through policies in the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan. The proposed development will be considered in relation to the policies contained within these documents.

6.2. National Policy

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, February 2024)

- 6.2.1. Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out guidance regarding nature conservation under Chapter 6 'Distinctive and Natural Places'. It provides guidance to local planning authorities relating to biodiversity and safeguarding statutory designated sites, non-statutory designated sites and protected species and their habitats. It also recognises the importance of trees, woodlands, and hedgerows.
- 6.2.2. PPW requires local authorities to fully consider the effect of planning decisions on natural heritage, inclusive of biodiversity and geological conservation in Wales, ensuring that development 'contributes to meeting international responsibilities and obligations for biodiversity and habitats and that appropriate weight is attached to statutory nature conservation designations, protected species, and biodiversity within the wider environment.
- 6.2.3. PPW also considers the potential biodiversity and geological conservation gains which can be secured within developments, including the use of planning obligations.
- 6.2.4. Of the changes made to edition 12 of the PPW the most notable is the increased focus on the use of the Step-wise Approach in designing and assessing proposals. This is an approach which formalises previous best practice methodology and requires impacts to be avoided in the first instance, minimised or mitigated if this is not possible, and as a last resort compensated or offset.
- 6.2.5. Through the application of the Step-wise Approach, and the implementation of habitat and species-specific enhancement measures, a Net Benefit for Biodiversity is expected for any developments in line with the requirement of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016¹⁹. Local authorities have a responsibility (Section 6 Duty) to ensure that development delivers this overall betterment for biodiversity, improves ecosystem resilience, and contributes to cumulative benefits at the landscape scale.
- 6.2.6. National policy therefore implicitly recognises the importance of biodiversity and that with sensitive planning and design, development and conservation of

¹⁹ *Environment (Wales) Act 2016*. Welsh Government. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/3/contents/enacted>

the natural heritage can co-exist, and benefits can, in certain circumstances, be obtained.

Technical Advice Note (Wales) 5: Nature Conservation and Planning

6.2.7. The purpose of Technical Advice Note (Wales) 5 (TAN5) is to supplement the information provided in PPW, insofar as it relates to nature conservation matters

6.2.8. TAN5 requires local planning authorities to fully consider the effect of planning decisions on biodiversity and ensure that appropriate weight is attached to statutory nature conservation designations, protected species and biodiversity and geological interests within the wider environment. It also considers the potential biodiversity and geological conservation gains which can be secured within developments, including the use of planning obligations.

6.3. Local Policy

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan 2006 – 2021

6.3.1. The Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan (LDP) (2006 – 2021) was adopted on the 2nd March 2011 and is the current document in use for planning control purposes and contains details of new housing, employment, and retail sites and also policies which will be used to determine planning applications.

6.3.2. The following policies within the Local Development Plan relate in whole or in part to nature conservation.

6.3.3. **Policy AW 8 - Protection And Enhancement Of The Natural Environment** states that the Rhondda Cynon Taf's natural environment will be preserved and enhanced by protecting it from inappropriate development. Development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that it will not cause harm to the features of a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) or other locally designated sites and there would be no unacceptable impact upon features of importance to nature conservation, including ecological networks.

6.3.4. This policy also states that all development proposals are required to demonstrate what measures are proposed for the protection and management of protected and notable species, and the mitigation and compensation of potential impacts.

6.3.5. **Policy CS 6 - Employment Requirements** states that in order to maximise the opportunities presented by the Capital Region and to ensure that Rhondda Cynon Taf achieves its economic potential, land will be allocated to meet strategic and local employment needs. Strategic Site 7: Land at Mwyndy / Talbot Green has 15 ha allocated for B1 use.

6.4. Discussion

6.4.1. The results of the ecological assessment demonstrate that, in accordance with *Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, 2024)* and *Technical Advice Note (TAN) 5*, the proposed development has been designed following the Step-wise Approach to biodiversity protection. Potential effects on designated sites and priority

habitats have been avoided through the retention of existing boundary features, notably hedgerows and mature trees, while any minor losses are to be offset through the creation of species-rich grassland, native scrub and wetland planting. These measures directly contribute to the requirement under Section 6 of the *Environment (Wales) Act 2016* for public authorities and developers to maintain and enhance biodiversity and improve ecosystem resilience.

- 6.4.2. At the local level, the proposals align with *Policy AW 8 – Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment* of the *Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan (2006–2021)*. The scheme demonstrates that there would be no unacceptable impact on features of importance to nature conservation and that appropriate measures are proposed for the protection and management of protected and notable species, including bats, reptiles and Badgers. The incorporation of new habitat features and ecological enhancements also supports the delivery of the policy's requirement for enhancement of the natural environment.
- 6.4.3. Furthermore, as the site forms part of *Strategic Site 7* under *Policy CS 6 – Employment Requirements*, the proposals respond positively to the policy's intent to deliver employment growth while ensuring that environmental protection and enhancement are integrated into site design.
- 6.4.4. In conclusion, the ecological assessment confirms that, subject to the implementation of the recommended mitigation and enhancement measures, the development accords with the relevant provisions of *Planning Policy Wales, TAN 5* and the *Rhondda Cynon Taf LDP*. The proposals therefore represent sustainable development in ecological terms, delivering compliance with both national and local policy objectives to secure a Net Benefit for Biodiversity.

7. Summary and Conclusions

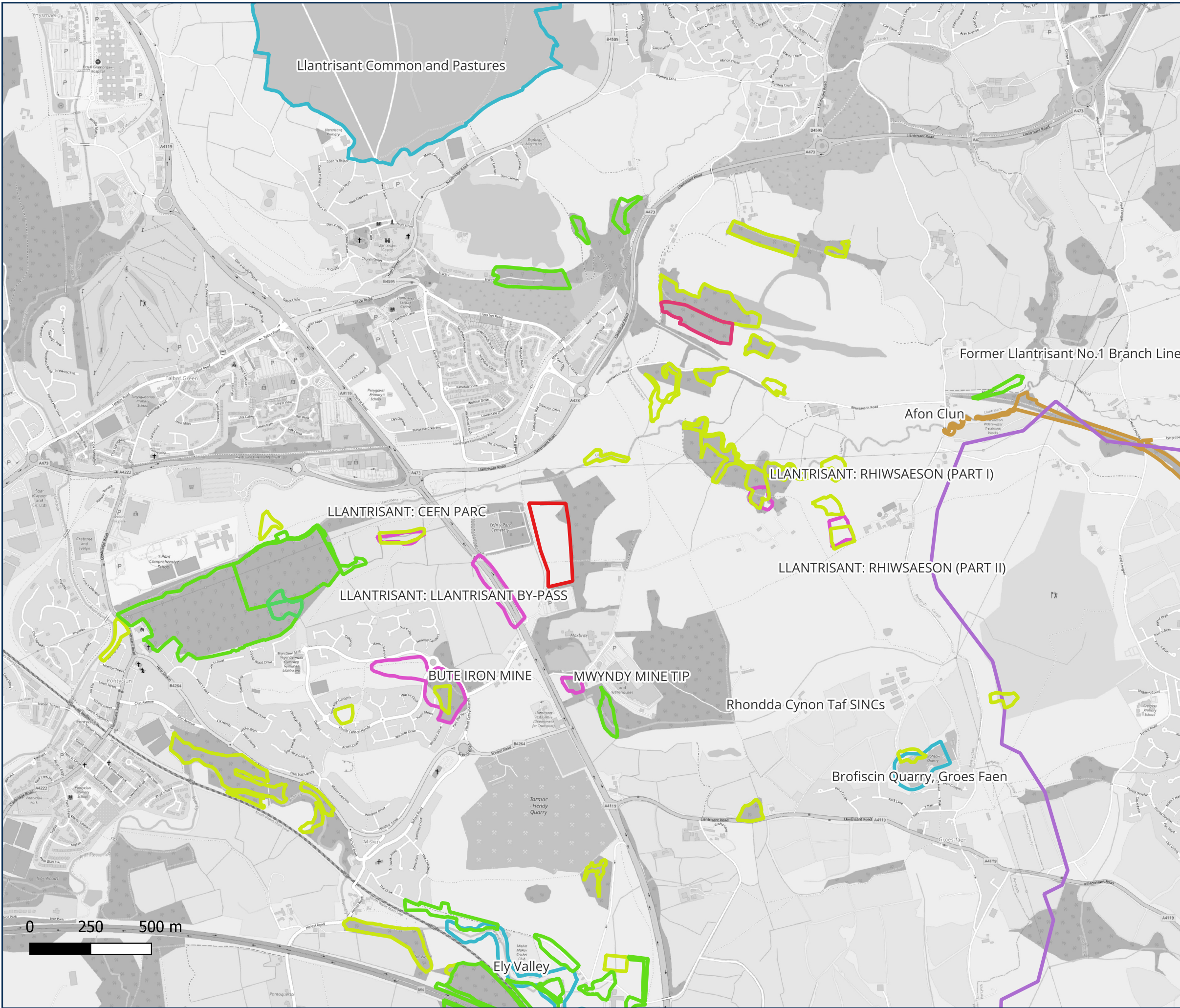
- 7.1.1. Ecology Solutions Ltd was commissioned by the Talbot Green Developments Ltd in October 2024 to undertake an Ecological Assessment of Land at Mwyndy Cross, east of the A4119. The assessment has considered the baseline ecological conditions present within the application site and evaluated the potential effects of the proposed development on designated sites, habitats and protected species.
- 7.1.2. The nearest statutory designated site is Brofiscin Quarry SSSI, located approximately 1.6 km to the southeast of the application site and designated for its geological features only. Given the lack of direct hydrological connections and the separation by intervening land uses, no significant effects are anticipated on the SSSI or other statutory designations. The site lies within the Afon Clun Valley and Rhiwsaeson Hill SINC (No. 147), although surveys confirm that it does not contain the habitats for which the SINC was designated. The ecological interest of the site is therefore considered to be of local rather than county importance.
- 7.1.3. Habitat surveys identified a mosaic of improved and semi-improved grassland, hedgerows, scattered trees and small wooded areas. While the grassland is of low botanical diversity, boundary features such as hedgerows and scrub offer locally valuable habitat structure and connectivity. Ancient Woodland Indicator Species including Bluebell and Sanicle were recorded in the woodland, and historic mapping indicates a small copse was present on site in the 19th century. These areas should be retained and protected through sensitive design.
- 7.1.4. Protected species surveys have been undertaken for Badger, reptiles, amphibians, Hazel Dormouse, bats and birds. A medium population of Grass Snake was recorded on site; the mitigation strategy includes retention of boundary habitats and installation of log and brash piles for refugia, as shown on the draft Landscape Plan (Appendix 4). No evidence of Hazel Dormouse was recorded, and the survey effort met the recommended threshold to confirm likely absence. A range of bat species was recorded on site during activity and static surveys, including a variety of light sensitive species. An appropriate lighting strategy will be adopted to mitigate for this potential disturbance, along with the installation of new bird and bat boxes to enhance nesting and roosting opportunities within the application site. Bird and invertebrate use is expected to be typical of farmland edge environments with limited potential for notable assemblages.
- 7.1.5. Subject to the implementation of the mitigation and enhancement measures outlined in this report and the incorporation of details into the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and Landscape Plan, it is considered that the development will not result in adverse effects on designated sites, habitats of ecological importance, or protected species. The proposed landscaping and biodiversity features will deliver a net enhancement in habitat quality and connectivity compared to the current baseline situation.
- 7.1.6. In conclusion, the proposals accord with the relevant provisions of *Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, 2024)* and *Technical Advice Note (TAN) 5*, as well as local policies AW 8 and CS 6 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf LDP. The development

therefore represents a sustainable proposal in ecological terms, contributing to the objectives of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience.

PLANS

PLAN ECO1

Site Location and Ecological Designations



KEY:

- Application Site Boundary
- Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW)
- Restored Ancient Woodland Site (RAWS)
- Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS)
- Ancient Woodland Site of Unknown Category
- Regionally Important Geodiversity Site (RIGS)
- Wildlife Site / SINC (Adopted)
- RCT Wildlife Sites / SINC's
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

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PLAN ECO1: Site Designations

Rev: A
June 2025

PLAN ECO2

Ecological Features



- KEY:**
- Application Site Boundary
 - Scrub
 - Neutral Grassland
 - Woodland – Broadleaved
 - Hedgerow with Trees



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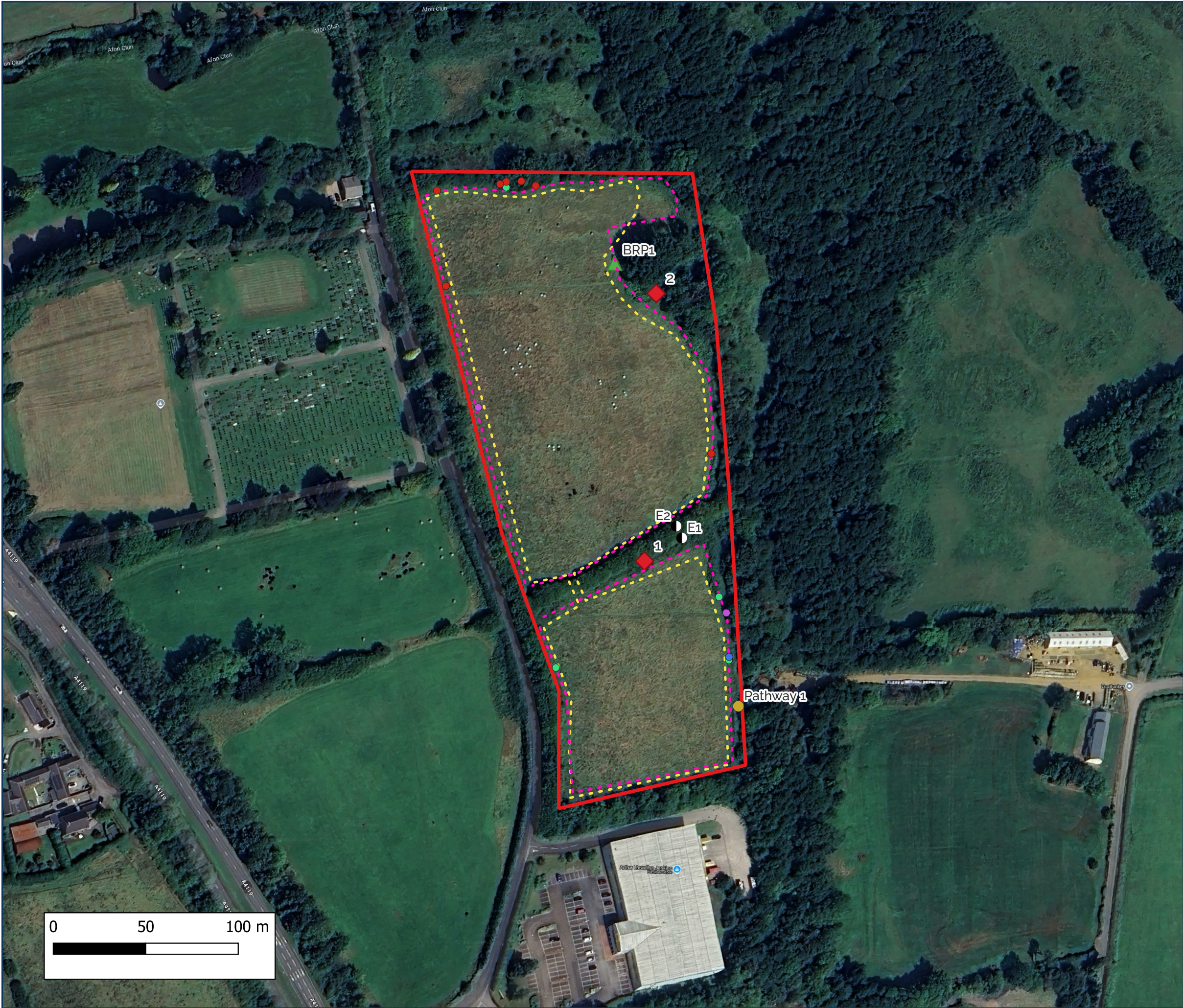
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PLAN ECO2: Ecological Features

Rev: A
July 2025

PLAN ECO3

Protected Species



KEY:

- Application Site Boundary
- Bat Roost Potential Tree
- Bat Monitoring Static Location
- NBW Transect
- Reptile Tins & Dormouse Tubes
- Female Grass Snake
- Juvenile Grass Snake
- Male Grass Snake
- Unsexed Grass Snake
- Badger Excavation
- Badger Sign (Pathway)



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PLAN ECO3: Protected Species

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Nov 2025

PLAN ECO4

Pond Locations