

BERSHAM COLLIERY TIP – PHASE 1 PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL



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CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 Scope and Approach	5
1.2 Personnel	5
1.3 Physical Characteristics of the Site	6
1.4 Legislative and Policy Framework	6
2.0 DESK STUDY, DATA COLLECTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Designated Sites	7
2.2 Protected/Notable Species	9
2.3 Invasive Species	11
3.0 EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY	12
3.1 Methodology, Scope, and Approach	12
3.2 Summary of Habitats Recorded	12
3.3 Habitats Within Site – Directly Affected	13
3.3.1 Broad-leaved Woodland & Scrub	13
3.3.2 Neutral Grassland	18
3.3.3 Bare Ground	19
3.3.4 Ephemeral/Short Perennial	21
3.3.5 Standing Water	22
3.3.6 Standing Water & Marsh	23
3.4 Habitats Adjacent to Site – Not Directly Affected	24
3.4.1 Broad-leaved Woodland & Scrub	24
3.4.2 Bare Ground – Roads & Railway	24
3.4.3 Buildings & Hardstanding - Industrial Areas	25
3.5 Faunal Survey	26
3.5.1 Mammals	26
3.5.2 Birds	28
3.5.3 Reptiles and Amphibians	28
3.5.4 Invertebrates	28
3.6 Invasive Species	31
4.0 DISCUSSION	32
4.1 Designated Sites	32
4.2 Habitats	34
4.3 Protected/Notable Species	36
4.4 Invasive Species	40
5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS	41
5.1 Designated Sites	41

5.2	Habitats	43
5.3	Protected/Notable Species.....	44
5.4	Invasive Species.....	49
5.5	General Mitigation Measures	49
6.0	REFERENCES.....	56

DRAWINGS

Drawing 001 Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Plan

APPENDICES

- Appendix A Summary of Key Legislation and Policies Relevant to the Proposals
- Appendix B Target Notes
- Appendix C Species List - Flora
- Appendix D Species List – Fauna

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope and Approach

AM Environmental Consulting Limited was commissioned by Alder Mill Planning & Design Consultants to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal for the Bersham Colliery Tip – Phase 1.

This report has been prepared to discharge Condition 16 of a decision notice relating to the *'reclamation of colliery spoil together with associated works including the siting of temporary structures and the installation of rail freight sidings at Bersham Bank Colliery Tip.'*

This report forms the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (PEAR) which identifies key likely ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the project, possible mitigation measures, and further surveys that may be required.

Completion of this Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been undertaken with reference to guidelines set out by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), and has been informed by the following ecological work, undertaken in June 2024:

- Desk Study
- Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

1.2 Personnel

This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal inclusive of Desk Study and Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was completed by Dr Anthea Miller, a leading expert in the field of land restoration and reclamation. Anthea holds a PhD in Restoration Ecology from The University of Nottingham, having spent several years undertaking research into the restoration of landfills and quarries, and the reclamation of colliery spoil and pit tip sites in the UK and abroad. She has over 25 years' experience as a practising ecologist and is a long-standing member of both the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), and the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management (CIWM). Anthea is the Managing Director of AM Environmental Consulting Limited. Prior to her current role, Anthea held senior roles within

multidisciplinary engineering consultancies SLR Group, WYG Group, and the Welsh engineering and environmental consultancy Egniol Limited, where she was responsible for establishing and managing the company's first ecology team in 2005.

1.3 Physical Characteristics of the Site

The site encompasses broad-leaved woodland and scrub, neutral grassland, ephemeral/short perennial, bare ground, standing water and marsh habitats. The site is bounded to the north by broad-leaved woodland and scrub, to the north east by industrial buildings and hardstanding, to the south west by broad-leaved woodland and scrub, beyond which are roads, and to the south east by broad-leaved woodland and scrub, beyond which is a railway. The site is centred at grid reference SJ31234790.

1.4 Legislative and Policy Framework

A summary of key legislation and policies relevant to the proposals is provided in Appendix A.

2.0 DESK STUDY, DATA COLLECTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

An information search and review of existing biological records was carried out. Information was obtained from Cofnod, the North Wales Environmental Information Service. Searches were undertaken to gain information on any protected/notable species in proximity to the site. Searches were completed by Cofnod for the site and up to 1 km from the site. Searches were taken from the centre of the site (grid reference: SJ31234790).

Further searches were completed for details of UK statutory and non-statutory designated nature conservation sites within a 2 km radius of the site, and European statutory nature conservation sites within a 5 km radius of the site (extended to 10 km for any statutory site designated for bats), with reference to the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) database managed by the Department of Environment Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

2.1 Designated Sites

Statutory Sites

European Statutory Nature Conservation Sites

The Johnstown Newt Sites Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is located approximately 665 m to the south of the site. The site supports one of the largest known populations of great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* in Great Britain. Good populations of other amphibian species are also present at this site.

There are no Special Protection Areas (SPA) and no RAMSAR wetlands within 5 km of the site. No European statutory sites designated for bats were found within 10 km of the site.

UK Statutory Nature Conservation Sites

The Stryt Las a'r Hafod Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located around 665 m to the south of the site. The Stryt Las a'r Hafod site is of special interest for its amphibians. The waterbodies at the site support one of the largest known breeding populations of the great crested newt in Great Britain. They also support significant populations of smooth newt *Triturus vulgaris*, palmate newt *T. helveticus*, common frog *Rana temporaria*, and common toad *Bufo bufo*.

There are no National Nature Reserves (NNR) and no Biosphere Reserves within 2 km of the site.

Non-statutory Sites

Important Invertebrate Areas (IIAs)

A site forming part of the North East Wales IIA is located 665 m to the south of the site. IIAs support nationally or internationally significant invertebrate populations and their habitats.

Wildlife Sites

The Wrexham W317 Erddig Estate Wildlife Site is located 783 m to the east of the site. The site is a National Trust estate comprising woodlands, semi-improved neutral grasslands, and marshes. The site supports an excellent diversity of plants, and also insect communities, which include twelve notable species and one red data species.

Ancient Woodland

An area of Ancient Woodland is located 641 m to the north east of the site.

Country Parks

The Bonc yr Hafod Country Park is located 677 m to the south of the site.

2.2 Protected/Notable Species

Bats

Records for the following bat species were found within the site:

- Long-eared bat species *Plecotus*
- Daubenton's *Myotis daubentonii*
- Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*
- Myotis bat species *Myotis*
- Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*
- Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

Over eighty bat and/or bat roost records were found within 1 km of the site. Records for other bat species including Whiskered, Natterer's, Brown Long-eared, and Brandt's bat were found within 1 km of the site.

Brown Hare

No brown hare records were found within or adjacent to the site. Two brown hare records were found within 1 km of the site. The nearest was for a location over 600 m to the south east of the site.

Hedgehog

No hedgehog records were found within or adjacent to the site. Seven hedgehog records were found within 1 km of the site via the records centre and nine records were found from further online database searches. The nearest record was for a location along Hafod Road around 517 m from the site.

Otter

No otter records were found within or adjacent to the site. Five otter records were found within 1 km of the site. The nearest record was for a location 359 m to the west of the site. Two of the records were for locations along the Glanyrafon Brook which is located around 360 m to the north of the site.

Polecat

Two polecat records were found within 1 km of the site. The nearest record was for a location 255 m to the south of the site.

Water Vole

No water vole records were found within or adjacent to the site, or within 1 km of the site.

Birds

No bird records were found within or adjacent to the site. Over two hundred and fifty bird records were found within 1 km of the site. The nearest record was for a sighting of a hobby 104 m from the site, along the road to the west of the site. The next nearest records were for herring gull, dunnock, redwing, song thrush, hawfinch, kestrel, lapwing, and house sparrow within 800 m of the site.

Reptiles and Amphibians

No reptile or amphibian records were found within or adjacent to the site. Over twenty reptile or amphibian records were found within 1 km of the site. Four grass snake records were found within 1 km of the site. The nearest record was for a location along Hafod Road 736 m to the south east of the site.

Eight great-crested newt records were found within 1 km of the site, all of which related to ponds. The nearest great-crested newt records were for ponds located 154 m, 405 m, 432 m, 478 m, and 587 m from the site. The remaining records were for great-crested newts within ponds located over 800 m from the site within the Bonc yr Hafod Country Park. Six common frog records were found within 1 km of the site. The nearest record was for a location over 800 m from the site. A number of *Lissotriton* records were found within 1 km of the site, all of which were for locations over 800 m from the site. Two common toad records were found within 1 km, the nearest was for a location over 900 m from the site.

Invertebrates

No invertebrate records were found within or adjacent to the site. Over thirty invertebrate records were found within 1 km of the site. The nearest records were for the following species, which were all recorded on the Bersham Pit Tip site to the north of the site:

- Buff-tailed Bumblebee
- Cinnabar
- Common Carder Bee
- Early Colletes
- Red-tailed Bumblebee
- Small Garden bumblebee
- White-tailed Bumblebee

A golden-ringed dragonfly was also recorded along the Glanyrafon Brook to the north of the site.

Plants

No higher or lower plant records were found within or adjacent to the site. Records for over sixty higher or lower plant species were found within 1 km of the site. The nearest record was for a cowslip around 319 m to the north west of the site.

2.3 Invasive Species

No invasive species records were found within the site. Sixteen invasive species records were found within 1 km of the site. The nearest records were for Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica* which was recorded within the Bersham Colliery Tip site to the north of the site, and a harlequin ladybird *Harmonia axyridis* which was also recorded within the Bersham Colliery Tip site to the north of the site.

3.0 EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY

3.1 Methodology, Scope, and Approach

In order to characterise the flora, fauna and habitats present within the site and to identify any ecological constraints to the proposed development, an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was carried out on the 1st June 2024. The survey of the site and its immediate surroundings was completed using the standard Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology (Joint Nature Conservation Council, 2010). Target notes were made for the habitats identified and for any areas of particular interest (Appendix B). Consideration was given to any vegetation within, adjacent to and in proximity to the site and a list of species was compiled and is included in Appendix C. The presence of invasive plants was also considered. The site is shown on Drawing 001. Any presence or potential presence of fauna at the site was also considered and a list of species encountered is provided in Appendix D. Details of the locations and extents of the habitats present within, adjacent to and in close proximity to the site are shown on Drawing 001, which also shows locations of target notes. The results of the survey are presented in full below and illustrated with photographs taken at various locations within and around the site during the survey.

3.2 Summary of Habitats Recorded

Habitats Within Site – Directly Affected

- Broad-leaved Woodland & Scrub
- Neutral Grassland
- Bare Ground
- Ephemeral/Short Perennial
- Standing Water
- Standing Water & Marsh

Habitats Adjacent to Site – Not Directly Affected

- Broad-leaved Woodland & Scrub
- Bare Ground – Roads & Railway
- Buildings & Hardstanding - Industrial Areas

3.3 Habitats Within Site – Directly Affected

3.3.1 Broad-leaved Woodland & Scrub

A band of broad-leaved woodland and scrub was located in the south-eastern portion of the site and a further band of scrub was located along the south-eastern boundary of the site. The woodland areas comprised mainly silver birch *Betula pendula* with occasional pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*. Dense common gorse *Ulex europaeus* dominated the shrub layer, with occasional dog rose *Rosa canina*. The ground cover within these areas comprised mainly exposed colliery spoil, that was in parts colonised by species including common bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, creeping cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, foxgloves *Digitalis purpurea*, oxeye daisies *Leucanthemum vulgare*, germander speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*, and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*.



Figure 1 Broad-leaved Woodland & Scrub (South-Eastern Portion)



Figure 2 Scrub (South-Eastern Boundary)

Further distinct parcels of dense broad-leaved woodland and/or scrub were located in the north-eastern, centre, south-western, northern, north-western, and north-north-western portions of the site. These areas were largely overgrown and difficult to access in parts, due to unstable, uneven, and sloping ground, which was often obscured by dense vegetation. Silver birch *Betula pendula* was dominant throughout. Pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, common gorse *Ulex europaeus*, dog rose *Rosa canina* and elder *Sambucus nigra*, were all present in parts. Ground cover within these areas included foxgloves *Digitalis purpurea*, teasels *Dipsacus fullonum*, broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, mouse-ear hawkweed *Hieracium* sp., oxeye daisies *Leucanthemum vulgare*, toadflax *Linaria vulgaris*, and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*.



Figure 3 Broad-leaved Woodland (North-Eastern Portion of Site)



Figure 4 Broad-leaved Woodland & Scrub (Centre of Site)



Figure 5 Scrub (South-Western Portion)



Figure 6 Scrub (Northern Portion)



Figure 7 Broad-leaved Woodland (North-Western Portion)



Figure 8 Broad-leaved Woodland (North North-Western Portion)

3.3.2 Neutral Grassland

Patches of neutral grassland were present throughout the site. A large area was located to the south of the centre of the site, comprising a mix of grasses including Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, with cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, creeping fescue *Festuca rubra*, and large quantities of common bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, creeping cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, white clover *Trifolium repens*, daisies *Bellis perennis*, and ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*. A number of smaller pockets of neutral grassland of similar composition and condition were interspersed throughout the site. These areas were too small and numerous to show on Drawing 001.



Figure 9 Neutral Grassland (South of the Centre of the Site)

3.3.3 Bare Ground

Areas of bare ground comprising exposed soil and/or colliery spoil were present in the south-eastern, eastern, and northern parts of the site, and around the woodland and scrub in the central area of the site.



Figure 10 Bare Ground (South-Eastern Area)



Figure 11 Bare Ground (Eastern Area)



Figure 12 Bare Ground (Northern Area)

3.3.4 Ephemeral/Short Perennial

An area of ephemeral/short perennial habitat was located in the central area of the site. The ground cover within this area comprised mainly exposed colliery spoil, which had been colonised predominantly by common bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, creeping cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, and various bog/peat mosses *Sphagnum spp.* Several very small patches of similar habitats were present throughout the site including along the edges of some of the tracks.



Figure 13 Ephemeral/Short Perennial (Central Area of the Site)

3.3.5 Standing Water

Some areas of standing water were located along the track around the central area of the site. At the time of the survey the water was turbid, and the pools were devoid of any vegetation. No faunal presence was noted.



Figure 14 Standing Water

3.3.6 Standing Water & Marsh

Some areas of standing water and marsh were located along the edge of the woodland in the north north-western portion of the site. The water was turbid, and the area was dominated by rushes *Juncus* sp.. No faunal presence was noted.



Figure 15 Standing Water & Marsh



Figure 16 Marsh

3.4 Habitats Adjacent to Site – Not Directly Affected

3.4.1 Broad-leaved Woodland & Scrub

Areas of broad-leaved woodland and scrub were located within the Bersham Colliery Tip site to the immediate north of the site. Strips of broad-leaved woodland and scrub were also located outside of the site perimeter fencing, along the south western and south-eastern boundaries of the site. Some of the woodland falling outside of the south-eastern boundary can be seen in Figure 2.



Figure 17 Broad-leaved Woodland & Scrub (North of the Site)

3.4.2 Bare Ground – Roads & Railway

Roads were located beyond the woodland to the south west of the site. A railway was located beyond the woodland and scrub to the south east of the site.

3.4.3 Buildings & Hardstanding - Industrial Areas

Industrial buildings and hardstanding were located immediately to the north east of the site.



Figure 18 Hardstanding & Skips (North East of the Site)



Figure 19 Hardstanding & Skips (North East of the Site)

3.5 Faunal Survey

An initial visual survey for faunal presence was undertaken during completion of the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, and any species which were directly encountered or whose presence was noted from tracks and signs were recorded. Particular consideration was given to the potential presence of the species for which records exist within the locality of the site during the survey. A list of the species encountered is presented in Appendix D.

3.5.1 Mammals

Badger – No direct observations were made. No signs of any badger presence were noted at the time of the survey.

Bats – No direct observations were made. No signs of any bat presence were noted at the time of the survey. Woodland and scrub within and around the site could support foraging and commuting bats and some of the trees could potentially support roosting bats.

Brown Hare – No direct observations were made. No signs of any brown hare presence were noted at the time of the survey. Given the proximity of the site to open farmland, the woodland and scrub within and around the site could potentially support foraging and commuting brown hares.

Fox – No direct observations were made; however, fox droppings were noted along the tracks within the site.

Hedgehog – No direct observations were made. No signs of any hedgehog presence were noted at the time of the survey. Woodland and scrub within and around the site could potentially provide suitable commuting and foraging habitats for hedgehogs. Overgrown areas could also provide suitable nesting and hibernating sites for hedgehogs.

Otter – No direct observations were made. No signs of any otter presence were noted at the time of the survey. The habitats within the site were not generally suitable for otters.

Polecat – No direct observations were made. No signs of any polecat presence were noted at the time of the survey. Woodland and scrub within and around the site could potentially provide suitable commuting and foraging habitats for polecats.

Rabbit – No direct observations were made; however, rabbit droppings were noted within the ephemeral habitat in the centre of the site.

Water Vole – No direct observations were made. No signs of any water vole presence were noted at the time of the survey. The habitats within the site were not generally suitable for water voles.

3.5.2 Birds

Blue tits, long-tailed tits, goldfinches, chiffchaffs, blackbirds, magpies, and crows were all observed within the woodland and scrub habitats within the site at the time of the survey. The habitats within and around the site could also potentially support other birds, however, no other birds were seen or heard at the time of the survey.

3.5.3 Reptiles and Amphibians

No direct observations were made and no signs of any reptile or amphibian presence were noted at the time of the survey. Habitats within the site could potentially support reptiles and amphibians.

3.5.4 Invertebrates

Cinnabar *Tyria jacobaeae* (S7), hoverfly *Helophilus* sp., seven-spot ladybird *Coccinella septempunctata*, and a variety of bumblebees including brown-banded carder bees *Bombus humilis* (S7) were observed foraging within the habitats within the site. An abundance of common bird's-foot trefoil and creeping cinquefoil that could support dingy skippers *Erynnis tages* (S7) and grizzled skippers *Pyrgus malvae* (S7) was also present within the site.



Figure 20 Brown-banded Carder Bee



Figure 21 Hoverfly



Figure 22 Cinnabar Moth



Figure 23 Seven-spot ladybird

3.6 Invasive Species

The presence of invasive plants was considered during completion of the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey. Pockets of Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica* were noted within the northern portion of the site at SJ31264797 and SJ31304795.



Figure 24 Japanese Knotweed



Figure 25 Japanese Knotweed

4.0 DISCUSSION

4.1 Designated Sites

Statutory Sites

European Statutory Nature Conservation Sites

The Johnstown Newt Sites Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is located approximately 665 m to the south of the site (around 533 m from the site boundary) and is separated from the site by a road and the A483 dual carriageway. Vegetation along the railway to the south of the site could potentially support commuting amphibians and other fauna between the sites. Given the intervening distance potential impacts on the site itself would not be anticipated. The development could, however, have an impact on mobile qualifying features of the SAC (great-crested newts). As a precaution, recommendations are provided in Section 5.0.

No European Statutory Nature Conservation Sites designated for bats were found within 10 km of the site. No impacts on any European Statutory Nature Conservation Sites designated for bats would therefore be anticipated.

UK Statutory Nature Conservation Sites

The Stryt Las a'r Hafod Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located around 665 m to the south of the site (around 533 m from the site boundary) and is separated from the site by a road and the A483 dual carriageway. Vegetation along the railway to the south of the site could potentially support commuting amphibians and other fauna between the sites. Given the intervening distance potential impacts on the site itself would not be anticipated. The development could, however, have an impact on mobile qualifying features of the SSSI (great-crested newts). As a precaution recommendations are provided in Section 5.0.

Non-statutory Sites

Important Invertebrate Areas (IIAs)

A site forming part of the North East Wales IIA is located 665 m to the south of the site (around 533 m from the site boundary) and is separated from the site by a road and the A483 dual carriageway. Vegetation along the railway to the south of the site and along the dual carriageway could potentially support commuting invertebrates and other fauna between the sites. Given the intervening distance potential impacts on the site would not be anticipated. As a precaution recommendations are provided in Section 5.0.

Wildlife Sites

The W317 Erddig Estate Wildlife Site is located 783 m to the east of the site. The site is separated from the site by roads and large open fields. Areas of woodland, hedgerows and trees provide good connectivity between the sites for commuting fauna. Given the intervening distance potential impacts on this site would not be anticipated. As a precaution recommendations are provided in Section 5.0.

Ancient Woodland

An area of Ancient Woodland is located 641 m to the north east of the site. Areas of woodland, hedgerows and trees provide good connectivity between the sites for commuting fauna. Given the intervening distance potential impacts on this site would not be anticipated. As a precaution recommendations are provided in Section 5.0.

Country Parks

The Bonc yr Hafod Country Park is located 677 m to the south of the site. The Country Park is located over 500 m from the site boundary and is separated from the site by a road and the A483 dual carriageway. Vegetation along the railway to the south of the site and along the dual carriageway could support commuting fauna between the sites. Given the intervening distance potential impacts on this site would not be anticipated. As a precaution recommendations are provided in Section 5.0.

4.2 Habitats

Biodiversity Action Plan and Other Habitats

Mature and Early-mature Trees

Mature and early-mature trees, along the south eastern boundary, and within parts of the woodland and scrub areas throughout the site, are considered to be of intrinsic value. These mature and early mature trees are providing a range of ecosystem benefits and cannot be easily replaced in the short to medium term. Development of the site will directly impact on and result in loss of these trees. Recommendations are provided in Section 5.0.

Scrub

Areas of scrub along the south eastern boundary, and within parts of the woodland and scrub areas throughout the site are considered to be of intrinsic value. The scrub habitats add to the diversity of the habitats available on the site and provide nesting habitats suitable for birds such as linnets (Section 7). Development of the site will directly impact on and result in loss of these areas of scrub. Recommendations are provided in Section 5.0.

Neutral Grassland

The areas of neutral grassland within the site are considered to be of intrinsic value. These habitats are supporting a variety of bumblebees and other pollinating insects, including brown-banded carder bees and Cinnabar moths both of which are Section 7 Species of Principal Importance in Wales. The habitats also provide a rich supply of butterfly food plants that could potentially support dingy skippers and grizzled skippers which are both Section 7 Species of Principal Importance in Wales. Development of the site will directly impact on and result in loss of these neutral grassland habitats. Recommendations are provided in Section 5.0.

Foxgloves, Bird's-foot Trefoil and Cinquefoil

An abundance of these particular species was present throughout the site. Pockets of bird's foot trefoil and creeping cinquefoil were present particularly within the areas of neutral grassland and the ephemeral/short perennial habitats, could support dingy skipper (S7) and grizzled skipper butterflies (S7).

Foxgloves were supporting brown-banded carder bees (S7). Development of the site will directly impact on and result in loss of these plants and habitats. Recommendations are provided in Section 5.0.

Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land

The habitats within the site fall under Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land, which is a Section 7 Habitat of Principal Importance in Wales, and a UK BAP Priority Habitat. Development of the site will directly impact on and result in the loss of this Priority Habitat. Recommendations are provided in Section 5.0.