Bat Survey: Mitchell Court, Tonypandy, CF40 2RD

Instructed by: Trivallis

Reported by: Ecological Services Ltd
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1.0 Background and Purpose

1.1 Mitchell Court is a large, detached block of flats which is situated in an urban environment in the town of Tonypandy. The building currently contains a number of separate residential dwellings. Planning permission is sought to demolish the existing building along with the garage block and lean-to structure present on the site. This report will investigate if there is potential to disturb bats and will be used to assist in the planning process.

1.2 To support the planning application a bat report has been commissioned to investigate if bats use the current property in any capacity during the maternity season, and for any evidence suggesting that bats use the property at other times of the year.

1.3 The report is prepared and undertaken by Mr. Richard Watkins BSc., an experienced bat ecologist with 13 years experience, and Aislinn Harris, a Natural Resources Wales licensed bat ecologist, license number S085699-1.

1.4 A data search was undertaken with SEWBReC (0223-779) to provide information on local bat and bird species in the area. The data search did not identify any historic records of bats being present in the property. The nearest recorded roosts are approximately 215m from the property which is a record for an unidentified bat species roost from 2004; 305m from the property which is a record for a Pipistrelle Species *(Pipistrellus sp.)* maternity roost from 2010 and 415m from the property which is a record for a Common Pipistrelle *(Pipistrellus pipistrellus)* day roost from 2020. There are various non roosting records for bats, the nearest being approximately 415m and 430m from the property which are records for foraging/commuting Common Pipistrelles; 690m from the property which is a record for a commuting Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle *(Pipistrellus pygmaeus)* and 1000m from the property which is a record for a foraging/commuting Common Pipistrelle.

1.5 A number of records for nesting birds were returned as part of the data search. There is a record for a visiting Swift nest site from 2021 within the property. Other species records include Blue Tit; Great Tit; Herring Gull; House Martin; House Sparrow; Lesser Black Backed Gull; Pied Wagtail and Swallow. All records are within 200m of the proposed development site.

1.6 The property is not within 10km of a designated SAC or SSSI for bats.

2.0 Site Description

2.1 Mitchell Court is a large, detached, brick and modern roughcast rendered building with areas of timber cladding and a flat roof. The building is five storeys in height which reduces to four storeys as the ground slopes backwards in an approximately north western direction. There are uPVC fasciae and soffits present and there is likely to be a cavity wall within the building.

2.2 There is a detached block of nine single storey, brick built garages to the immediate north west of the property with a corrugated metal sheet roof and areas of timber fasciae but no soffits.

2.3 There is a detached, single storey, brick and modern roughcast rendered lean-to structure to the west of the main building with a corrugated metal sheet roof and small areas of timber fasciae but no soffits.

2.4 The building dates back to in excess of 60 years and is situated in an urban environment. There are likely to be moderate amounts of ambient lighting within the vicinity of the property.

2.5 An area of species poor semi improved grassland is present to the south west of the buildings. The grassland slopes steeply down from the tree line along the western boundary to the tarmac access road and parking areas in the interior of the site. The grassland has been engineered to create two narrow plateaus with concrete paths through the area. Whilst early March is a sub optimal time of year to assess habitat, given the species noted during the visit and the likely maintenance of the grassland it would seem most likely the grassland is species poor semi improved. Species noted include dandelion, ribwort plantain, creeping cinquefoil, creeping buttercup, cocks foot and at least 1 other species of grass.

2.6 The western boundary of the site predominately is a metal palisade fence line. A tree line is present to the west of the site adjacent to the metal fencing. Species noted within the tree line include ash, field maple, alder, holly, a species of privet and a species of oak tree. The understory is predominantly bramble, ivy cocksfoot, cleavers, wood avens and a species of vetch thought to be bush vetch was observed occasionally.

2.7 The nearest significant watercourse is the Rhondda River, approximately 255m to the east of the property, with a smaller watercourse, Nant Clydach, approximately 850m to the west of the property. Additionally, Glyncornel Lake lies approximately 870m to the north of the property.

2.8 Mitchell Court is a large, detached flat block which is situated in an urban environment in the town of Tonypandy. There is a tree-line to the immediate west of the property and the riparian corridor along the Rhondda River is approximately 255m to the east of the property. Additionally, there are large expanses of open land and areas of forestry starting approximately 335m to the south west; 340m to the north west and 490m to the east of the property. The tree lined Clydach Vale Country Park lies approximately 790m to the west of the property. There is moderate ecological connectivity for bats to the wider environment.

2.9 The National Grid Reference of the site is: **SS 9913 9285.**

3.0 Report Constraints

3.1 Bats use different roosts throughout the year. Bats hibernate in torpor for weeks at a time throughout the cold months, mainly underground in caves and in deep rot holes at the centre of large mature trees. Bats are habitual and can live upwards of twenty years. During the summer months they will normally return annually to the same roost, usually in attics of buildings to form maternity colonies. Outside the maternity season, a scoping survey can be limited as the majority of any bats using the structure as a summer roost may not be present. External evidence such as droppings and staining which can identify bat use may have been removed by the rain. Therefore this survey will evaluate potential for bat use, in addition to searching for evidence of bats.

3.2 The report is solely concerned with bats in relation to this building. Trees and other buildings not mentioned directly have not been included in this report.

3.3 Ecological surveys are limited by factors which affect the presence of plants and animals such as the time of year; migration patterns and behaviour. The survey methods employed can provide evidence for the potential presence of bats at the times when the site was visited. Although the methods follow best practice guidance and were carried out in such a way as to maximise the chances of detection, failure to detect the target species cannot be considered as definitive proof of their absence.

3.4 Even though bats are habitual creatures they can still move to new roosts if more suitable. Therefore this report cannot predict the status of the structure in regard to bat occupancy in the future. This report should be acted upon as soon as practical and will be valid for eighteen months from the date of issue. If planning or building works are delayed, it is the responsibility of the client to discuss and gain approval from the *author* before work commences. Natural Resources Wales will only consider reports up to eighteen months old.

3.5 Internal access into the building was not possible due to each flat having individual tenants. This was not considered to be a significant constraint due to the building having a flat roof. Given the fact that the building is proposed for demolition, at least one activity survey will be undertaken.

4.0 Legal Constraints

4.1 Bats, and any place a bat uses for breeding or shelter, either currently occupied or unoccupied are protected by European and British law, predominantly by **The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017**, which are the principal means by which the Habitats Directive is transposed from European directive into law in England and Wales.

4.2 In summary this law states that it is an offence to:

- **Deliberately capture or kill a bat**
- **Deliberately disturb a bat**
- **Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat**
- **Keep; transport; sell; exchange or offer for sale or exchange a living or dead bat or any part of a bat**

4.3 'Deliberately' may also be interpreted, as not intending to injure or kill a bat but having done so due to being insufficiently informed and unaware of the consequences of the action.

4.4 For a more comprehensive description and exact wording of the legislation please refer to:
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/490/contents/made

4.5 Where there is a risk that a bat roost may be present, it is incumbent upon the owner to commission a specialist bat survey to identify bat roosts before any work commences. Maximum penalties for offences relating to disturbance to bats or their roosts can amount to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or fines of up to Level 5 on the standard scale under the Criminal Justice Act 1982/1991 (i.e. £5000 in April 2001) per roost or bat disturbed or killed, or to both.

4.6 If a bat roost is discovered, no work that could affect the roost can be undertaken until Natural Resources Wales grants a licence endorsing the work. A thorough method statement and adequate mitigation proposal will need to be submitted to support any licence application.

4.7 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 puts an onus onto responsible bodies such as Local Planning Authorities to not only preserve, but also to enhance biodiversity meaning that planning applications must offer an element of ecological gain as well as preserving any aspects of ecological importance.

5.0 General Information

5.1 Bats are unable to build roosts themselves but instead rely on both man made and naturally occurring features to provide suitable accommodation. Bats generally prefer older buildings built with traditional materials, as traditional building methods provide more opportunities for gaps and entrances to buildings. Traditional cut roofs are preferred to a roof with trusses. Bats also prefer to roost where the external roost area has access to sunlight during the day such as south facing roof elevations.

5.2 Bats can utilise the following features on a building; end tiles, barge boards, soffit, gable ends, porches, lead flashing, hanging tiles**,** ridge tiles**,** broken tiles**,** eaves**,** sash window frames**,** wood cladding**,** fascia boards**,** window sills and internal roof spaces and timbers. Although this list demonstrates the most popular roosting sites it is by no means definitive. Bats can use apertures as small as 10mm in diameter to gain access.

5.3 The U.K bat population is divided into two distinct families, Rhinolophidae and Vespertilionidae. In general, Rhinolophidae (Horseshoe) bats differ in their roosting requirements to Vespertilionidae (the remainder of UK bat species). Horseshoe bats prefer to roost in large areas such as internal attic spaces and hang in the open from the roof of the roost. They tend to roost in visible clusters to maintain the high temperatures that a maternity colony needs. Horseshoe bats also prefer free flight access and egress into the roosting area. Horseshoe bats tend to be more light averting to other UK bat species, and routinely fly around the internal roosting area to warm up before exiting. It is noted that Plecotus (Long Eared) bats share some of these preferences. Vesper bats are, on the whole, crevice dwelling bats who squeeze into small apertures to access the roost. These, like Horseshoe bats, will cluster in maternity colonies, but are normally hidden from view. Vesper bats, with the exception of Long Eared bats, do not require a large internal roost to fly around before exit. Long Eared bats, although part of the vesper family, are very light averting and will, on occasions share the roosting patterns of both Horseshoe and crevice dwelling species.

6.0 External and Internal Scoping Survey

6.1 The external scoping survey was undertaken on the **10th March 2023** in conditions of good natural light. All external aspects of the building were comprehensively evaluated for roost potential. Evidence was also sought for any staining or droppings which could suggest bat occupation.

6.2 The building was inspected for overt evidence of bat presence and occupation such as:

- Staining around the entry of roosting point caused by oils secreted by the bat into its fur
- Scratching on surfaces caused by the bat in the acts of take off and landing
- Bat droppings on walls; floors; roof voids; window sills or panes and barge boards
- Urine stains below a possible entrance site, within the entrance to a cavity or on timbers used for roosting
- Bats can produce chatter on warm evenings prior to leaving the roost. A heterodyne bat detector is used to help determine this
- Flies around the entrance or on the floor of possible roosts, which may be attracted to bat guano

6.3 Due to the condition of the main building, there were a limited number of opportunities present for bats to access and use the building and those that were available were deemed as having low potential for roosting bats. There were small areas of raised lead flashing around some of the windows on the main building. The height of the main building and the presence of a flat roof meant that some features may have been missed during the

external scoping survey. All potential roost features (PRFs) are shown within the site photographs in Appendix 3 of this report.

6.4 A single storey lean-to structure to the west of the main building had a small number of features which bats could possibly utilise. Apertures in the brickwork and underneath the metal sheet roof were noted along the eastern elevation.

6.5 The garage building to the north west of the main residential block appeared to be generally tight with limited potential for bat use. However, some areas of the fascia were rotten and could possibly provide bat access into the building.

6.6 No droppings or evidence of bats were discovered on any external features although this would not be definitive of bats not using the building at other times of the year.

6.7 No evidence of nesting bird use of the building was observed during the scoping survey.

6.8 An internal scoping survey of the building was not possible during the site visit due to each flat having individual tenants. The logistics of arranging a suitable day and time to visit each separate flat was not possible to co-ordinate. Given the presence of a flat roof to the building and likely limited attic space, the lack of an internal survey is not considered a large constraint to the survey assessment.

7.0 Ground Based Visual Roost Assessment (GBVRA)

7.1 An assessment of trees for their potential bat roosting use should start with a Ground Based Visual Roost Assessment (GBVRA) of the trees. The aim of the GBVRA is to assess the tree from ground level for features which bats could use. The surveyor looks for any cavity; crack or gap in the tree which bats could use for roosting purposes.

7.2 All of the trees proposed for removal were subject to a GBVRA on the **10th March 2023.** This is an optimal time of year to undertake the GBVRA as the leaf coverage of the trees is at its minimum so any features high up within the tree can be visualised. It is not clear what trees will possibly be impacted by future development proposals, therefore, all trees on site were subject to the same level of survey work.

7.3 The surveyors stood at the base of each tree and visually inspected it using close focusing binoculars. Where dense understory prevented close access around a tree, the best vantage points possible were gained. The trees were categorised into negligible; low; moderate or high bat roost potential based on the features observed. An extract of Table 4.1 from the BCT Good Practice Survey Guidelines is provided below on how trees should be categorised.

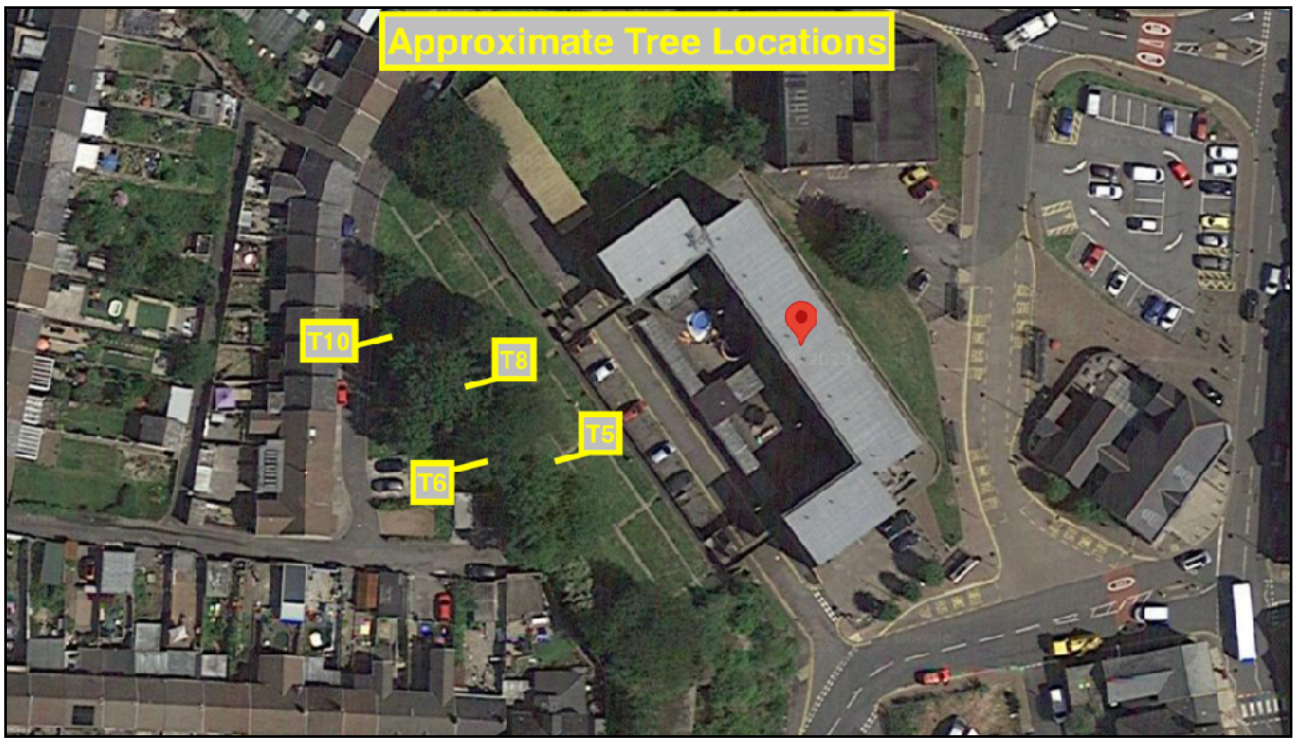
Suitability	Description of Roosting Features
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by bats
Low	A tree of sufficient size and age to contain potential roost features but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential
Moderate	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation value.
High	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.

7.4 An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) has not yet been undertaken so the trees present on site have not been tagged/numbered.

7.5 During the GBVRA, twelve trees or groups of trees were surveyed. Four of these trees were classed as having low potential for bat roosting use. The remaining eight trees were classed as having negligible potential for bat roosting use as no potential roost features (PRFs) were present.

7.6 The low potential trees can be removed following a precautionary methodology which is discussed in Section 8 of this report. All of the negligible potential trees can be removed without further consideration for bat roosting use.

7.7 The four trees which were assessed as having low potential for bat roosting use were categorised as such due to the moderate coverage of ivy present on each tree. No other PRFs were noted during the GBVRA, however, there could be features present underneath the ivy cover. Photographs of the low potential trees are provided in Appendix 4.



Low Potential Trees	Description of Trees
T5 (Ash)	Located approximately at the west of the site. Moderate ivy coverage.
T6	Located approximately at the west of the site. Moderate ivy coverage.
T8	Located approximately at the north west of the site. Moderate ivy coverage.
T10	Located approximately at the north west of the site. Moderate ivy coverage.

8.0 Emergence Survey

8.1 The emergence survey was carried out during the maternity season and adhered to current best practice guidelines. This survey was conducted from half an hour before sunset until two hours post sunset. The surveyors used are all experienced bat counters who have undergone sufficient training in basic bat ecology and bat activity. All sound analysis was undertaken by Richard Watkins.

8.2 The emergence survey gave extra consideration to the features identified during the external scoping survey which could be utilised by bats. The location of bat surveyors is shown in Appendix 2.

8.3 Emergence Survey on **15th June 2023**

- Sunset: 21:33
- Weather: Dry and calm with approximately 25% cloud cover
- Temperature: 20 degrees celsius
- Surveyors: Jonathan Daniels; Adam Hoskins; Kieran Meek; Debbie Parry; Mason Smith; Kieran Turner and Caitlin Watkins

No bats were observed emerging from the building.

8.4 The weather conditions were dry and calm with little wind and no rain and therefore conducive for bat activity. The temperature was above 10 degrees celsius during the emergence surveys.

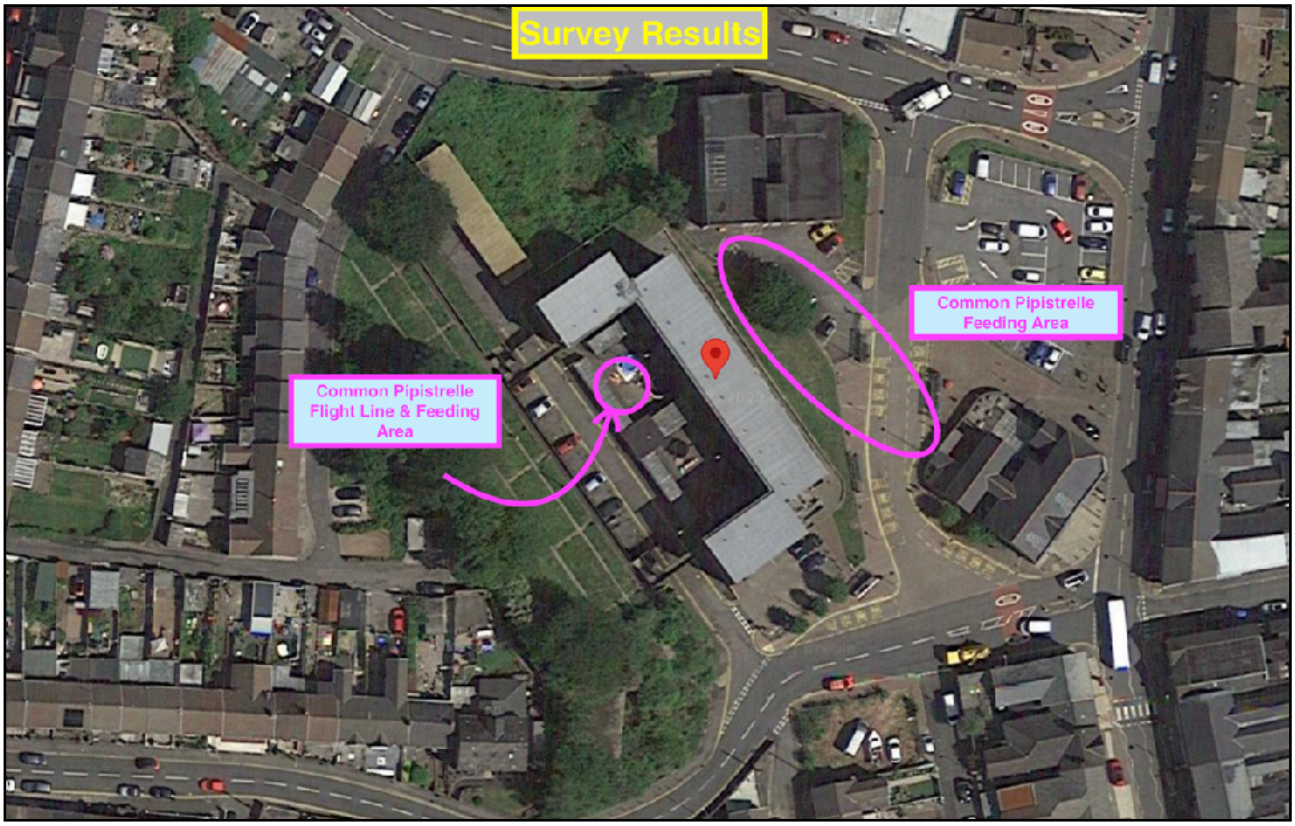
8.5 The best viewing conditions were obtained.

8.6 Echo-meter Touch 2 Pro bat detectors were present to acoustically record any bat calls.

8.7 Analysis of sound recording on bat detectors:

Species of Bats Recorded in the Area:	
Common Pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

8.8 During the emergence survey, a very low number of bat calls were recorded. A small number of Common Pipistrelles were observed feeding to the east of the property but did not emerge from the building and a Common Pipistrelle flew from the western tree-line and was observed foraging to the west of the property.


Survey Results
Common Pipistrelle Feeding Area
Common Pipistrelle Flight Line & Feeding Area

9.0 Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

9.1 During the emergence survey, no bats were observed emerging from the building.

9.2 Throughout the survey, only a very low number of foraging Common Pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus)* were observed and no bats were observed using the building. Therefore it is suggested that the proposed building works will have a negligible impact on the local bat population.

9.3 The building does not offer significant hibernation potential for bats. The external walls were sound with no visible apertures for bats preventing access into the wall structure. The building provides a number of residential flats which are all occupied and therefore central heating will be on which does not provide a thermally stable environment for hibernating bats. When considering the limited bat access points into the building, the hibernation use of the building is considered to be limited.

9.4 No evidence of nesting bird use of the building was observed during the emergence survey.

9.5 The main building and lean-to structure to the west were assessed as having at least low potential for roosting bats. While only a limited number of opportunities present for bats to access and use the building were noted, the site does have good habitat connectivity to the wider landscape and the height of the building may have obscured suitable bat roosting features. As the development proposals include demolition it was advised that at least 1 bat activity survey be completed on the two buildings.

9.6 The garage building was assessed as having very limited bat roosting potential. While two areas of rotten fascia were noted, the gaps did not appear to lead into any larger space. The corrugated metal sheet roof is also likely to suffer from temperature fluctuation during the summer months making it less suitable for bat roosting use. On balance, the garage building was assessed as having negligible potential for bat roosting use. No further bat survey work was recommended for this structure.

9.7 During the GBVRA, eight of the twelve trees surveyed were assessed as having negligible potential for bat roosting use. These trees can be removed without further consideration of bat roosting use. However, nesting bird considerations are still required.

9.8 Four of the twelve trees surveyed were assessed as having low potential for bat roosting use. These trees will be removed under a precautionary soft fell methodology, preferably in September/October to avoid maternity and hibernation seasons. Soft fell methodology is where the tree limbs are cut and left grounded overnight to allow any bats to make their way out.

9.9 The site is located in an area with moderate ecological connectivity for bats to the wider environment and the surrounding environment does offer potential for bat use.

9.10 There are likely to be moderate amounts of ambient lighting within the vicinity of the site given the presence of residential properties and shops in directions immediately around.

9.11 Following commencement of works, in the unlikely event that the contractor encounters any bats during any works, then work must immediately stop and the bat worker summoned. If for any reason they cannot be

contacted, advice must be sought from Natural Resources Wales, (Telephone Number 0300 065 3000). No works would recommence until a licence is issued by NRW sanctioning works going forward. The guidance note on finding bats found in the appendices must be followed.

9.12 A suitable external lighting plan must be implemented to reduce any disturbance to the bats feeding and commuting around the property.

9.13 Any tree removal must be completed outside of the bird nesting season of March to August inclusive. If this is not achievable, an ecologist must inspect any trees or ground vegetation with the potential for birds to be present for active birds' nests prior to removal works beginning. If an active nest is identified a buffer zone of at least 5m around the nest must be observed until the chicks have fledged. Only then can the vegetation be removed. Greater buffer zones around nests may be required depending on the species and habitat the nest is within.

9.14 Any buildings to be removed must also consider the potential for nesting birds to be present. Ideally they would be demolished outside of the bird nesting season. If this is not achievable, a nesting bird check by an ecologist will be required prior to demolition.

9.15 Proposed detailed architectural drawings are not currently available. Once available, further advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist in regard to the size, type and location of any proposed new ecological enhancements.

9.16 Once the new enhancements have been agreed between relevant parties, these must be added to the architectural drawings prior to submission of the Planning Application.

9.17 Any new enhancements must not be directly illuminated and a dark corridor must be established allowing undisturbed access for any bats away from the site.

Signed: *Ash Harris* ***Date: June 2023***

10.0 Appendix

Aerial Site Photographs

Surveyor Positions

OS Map

Site Photographs

GBVRA Photographs

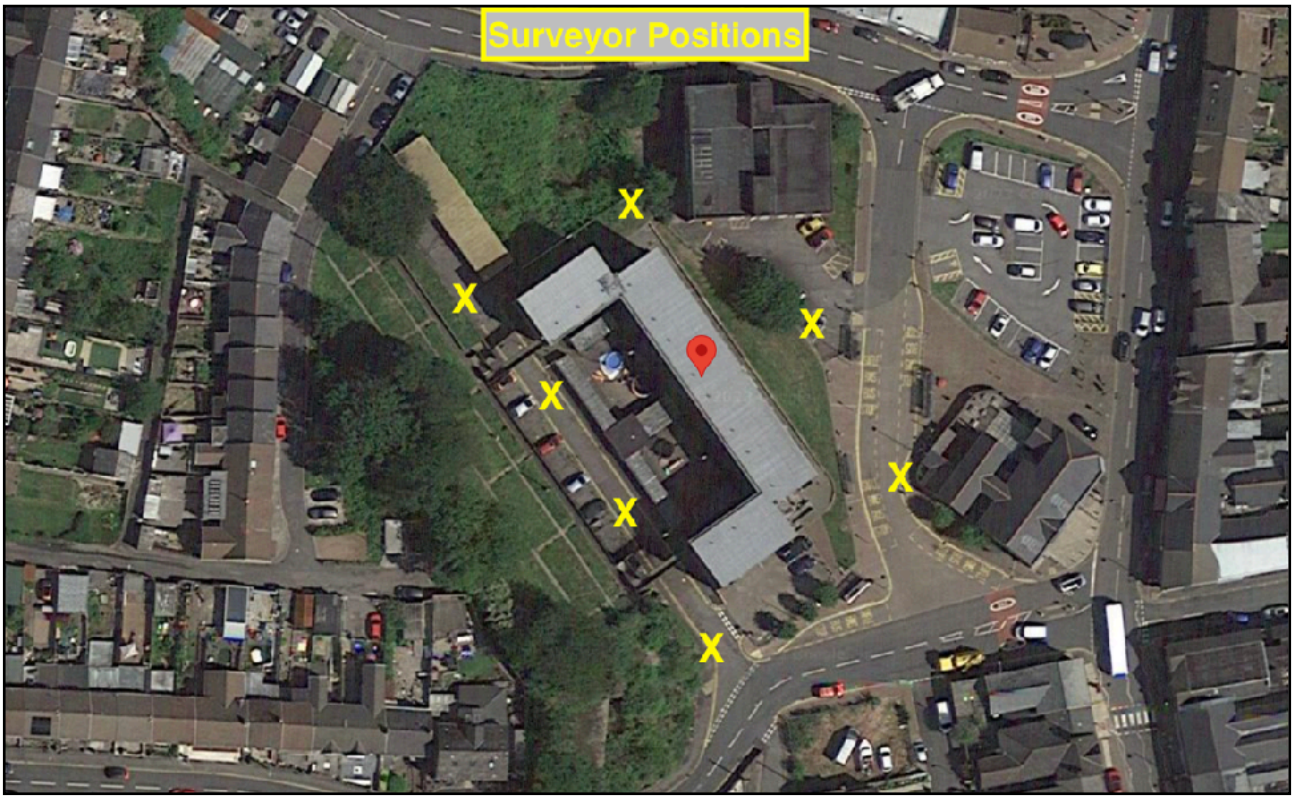
Wider Ground Photographs

Appendix 1 Aerial Site Photographs

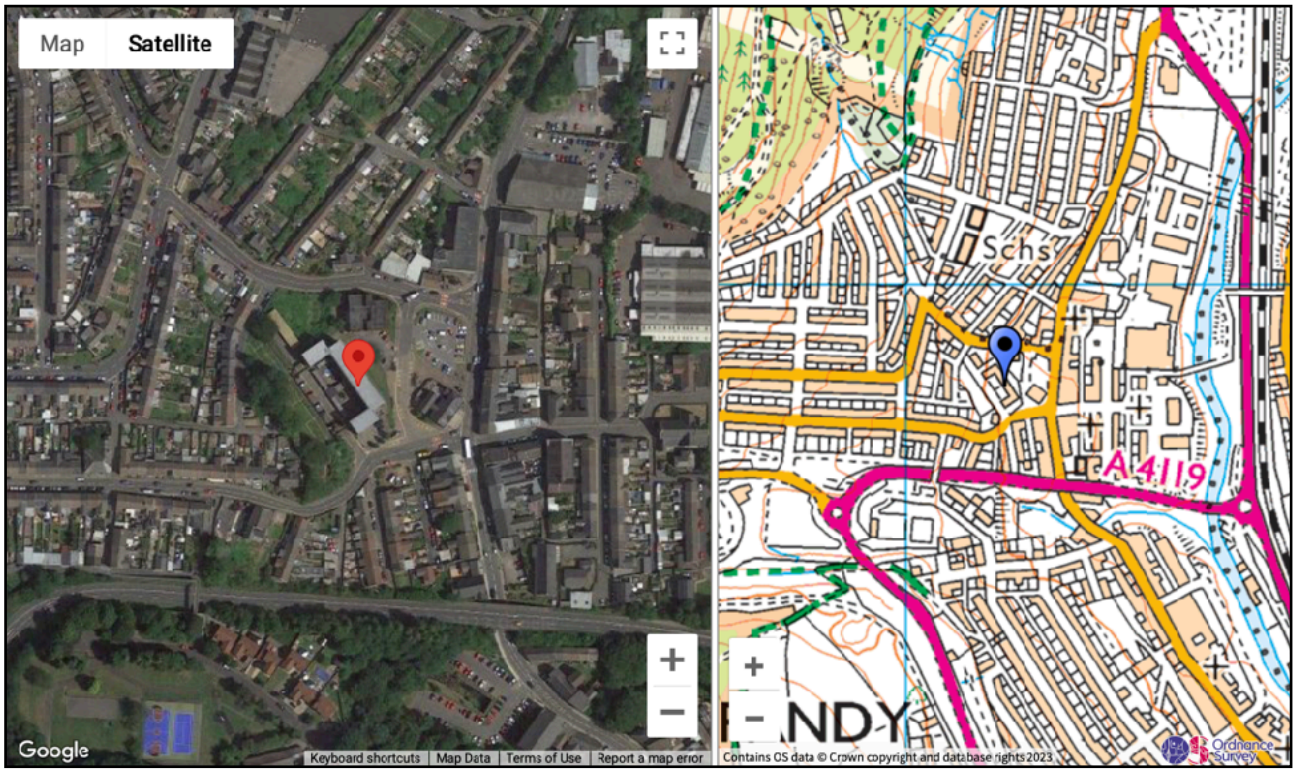
The site in its immediate environment.

The site in its wider environment offering moderate ecological connectivity to the surrounding habitat.

Appendix 2 Surveyor Positions



Appendix 3 OS Map National Grid Reference SS 9913 9285



Appendix 4 Site Photographs

Garage Block to the North West of the Main Building

South Eastern Elevation of the Garage Block

Areas of Raised Timber Fasciae on the Garage Block

North Western Elevation of the Main Building

Small Areas of Raised Lead Around the Windows

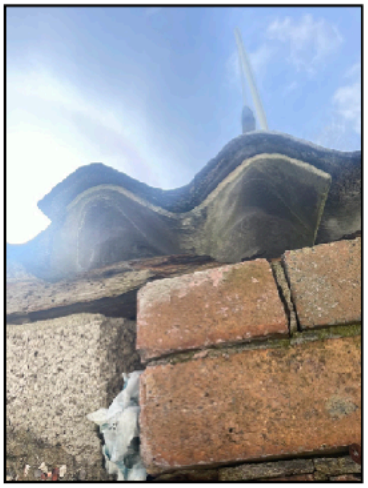
South Eastern Elevation of the Main Building

Eastern Elevation of the Main Building

Western Elevation of the Main Building

Raised Timber Fasciae on the Lean-to Structure

Apertures in the Brickwork on the Lean-to Structure



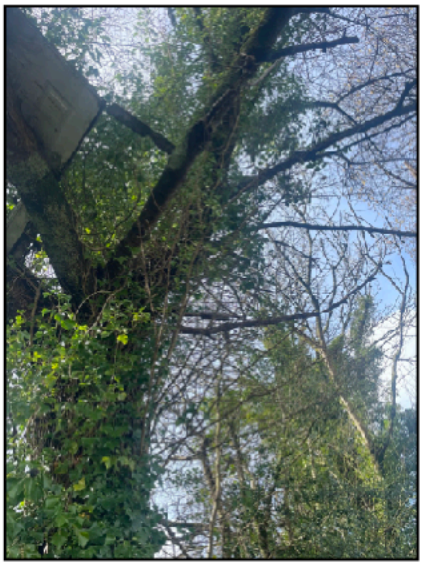
Apertures Underneath the Metal Sheet Roof on the Lean-to Structure

Detached Lean-to Structure

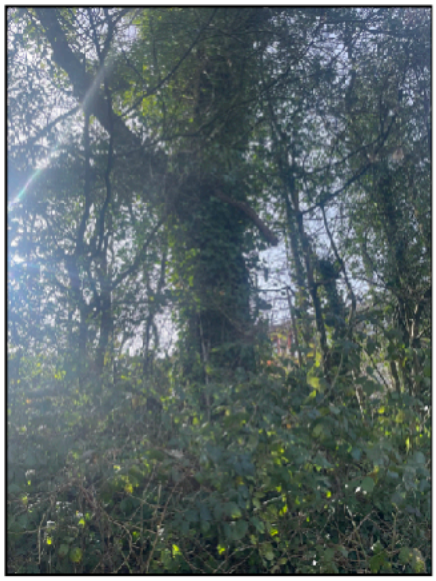
Appendix 5 GBVRA Photographs

T5

T6



T8



T10

Appendix 6 Wider Ground Photographs

Grassland looking north west

Grassland looking south west

Concrete path looking southwards

Fence & Ivy cover to south west of grassland