Bat Survey: Rhondda Principal Social Services Office, Berw Road, Tonypandy, CF40 2HH

Instructed by: Trivallis

Reported by: Ecological Services Ltd
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1.0 Background and Purpose

1.1 The Rhondda Principal Social Services Office is a large, detached office block which is situated in an urban environment in the town of Tonypandy. The building currently contains a number of separate offices. Plans have not yet been finalised but it is thought likely that the existing building will be demolished. 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 Hannah Evans, an experienced bat ecologist with 5 years experience, and Aislinn Harris, a Natural Resources Wales licensed bat ecologist, license number S092780-1.

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 245m from the property which is a record for an unidentified bat species roost from 2004; 330m from the property which is a record for a Pipistrelle Species *(Pipistrellus sp.)* maternity roost from 2010 and 445m from the property which is a record for a Common Pipistrelle *(Pipistrellus pipistrellus)* day roost from 2020.

1.5 There are various non roosting records for bats, the nearest being approximately 440m and 445m from the property which are records for foraging/commuting Common Pipistrelles; 700m from the property which is a record for a commuting Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle *(Pipistrellus pygmaeus)* and 1,020m from the property which is a record for a foraging/commuting Common Pipistrelle.

1.6 A number of records for nesting birds were returned as part of the data search. 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.

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

2.0 Site Description

2.1 The Rhondda Principal Office is a large, detached, red brick building which is two storeys in height with an undercroft car parking area. The building has a flat felt roof and there are no fasciae or soffits present. There is a two storey, brick and brick rendered extension to the western elevation of the main building with a flat felt roof. There is likely to be a cavity wall within the building.

2.2 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.

2.3 The nearest significant watercourse is the Rhondda River, approximately 240m to the east of the property, with a smaller watercourse, Nant Clydach, approximately 860 to the west of the property. Additionally, Glyncornel Lake lies approximately 830 to the north of the property.

2.4 The Rhondda Principal Office is a large, detached office block which is situated in an urban environment in the town of Tonypandy. There is a tree-line approximately 60m to the south west of the property and the riparian corridor along the Rhondda River is approximately 220m to the east of the property. Additionally, there are large expanses of open land and areas of forestry starting approximately 320m to the north west; 360m to the south west and 500m to the east of the property. The tree lined Clydach Vale Country Park lies approximately 800m 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 9914 9290**

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.

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 **20th July 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 age and condition of the building, there were a very 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 potential apertures where the felt roof overlapped the brick walls; there was a small area of raised felt to the southern elevation of the extension and there was a small aperture within the ceiling of the undercroft car parking area. All potential roost features (PRFs) are shown within the site photographs in Appendix 3 of this report.

6.4 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.

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

6.6 There was no internal attic space within the building and the building is flat roofed with suspended ceilings internally.

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 building was assessed as having low bat roosting potential during the external scoping survey. Given the limited bat roosting potential, one activity survey was recommended on the building during the core bat activity season, in line with guidance given within the BCT Survey Guidelines (2016). The locations of the bat surveyors are shown in Appendix 2.

8.3 Emergence Survey on **20th July 2023**

- Sunset: 21:20
- Weather: Dry and calm with approximately 25% cloud cover
- Temperature: 13 degrees celsius
- Surveyors: Hannah Evans; Tyrone Evans; Allen Harvey; Debbie Parry; Kinga Streich; Keith Watkins and Scott 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 survey.

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. No bats were observed emerging from the building and a small number of Common Pipistrelles were observed foraging to the south west of the building.


Survey Results
Common Pipistrelle Feeding Area

9.0 Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

9.1 During the activity 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 individual office units 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 building was 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 are likely to include demolition it was advised that at least 1 bat activity survey be completed on the building.

9.6 A single bat activity survey was completed on the building using seven surveyors to cover all aspects of the building. The survey was completed in July and in the optimal season for bat activity surveys. As no bats were observed emerging from the building during the survey it is considered unlikely that the building is currently used as a roosting location by bats. No further surveys are recommended.

9.7 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. Security lighting was left on in the undercroft car parking area throughout the duration of the survey and there was a bright street light to the east of the building. The remaining elevations offered darker areas for bats to forage and commute.

9.8 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.

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

9.10 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.

9.11 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.

9.12 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.

9.13 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.

10.0 Appendix

Aerial Site Photographs

Surveyor Positions

OS Map

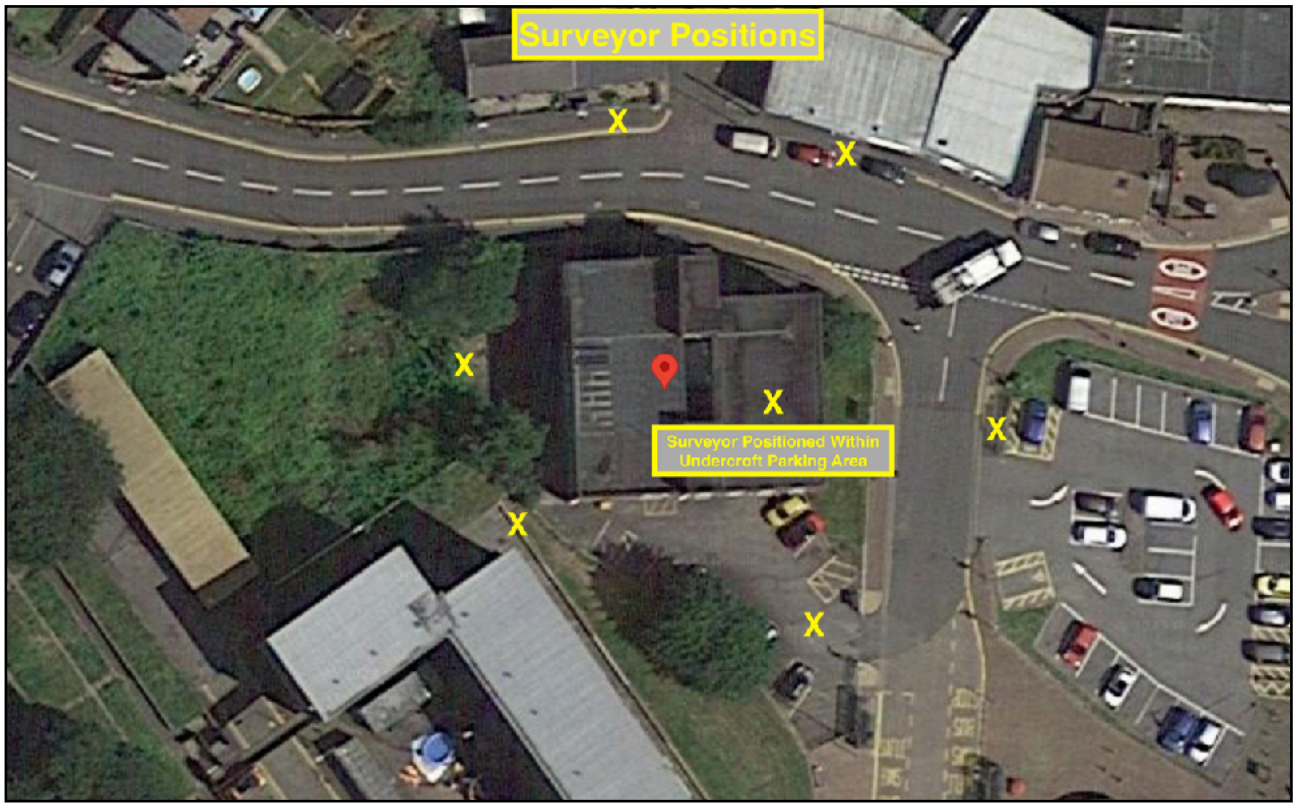
Site Photographs

Appendix 1 Aerial Site Photographs

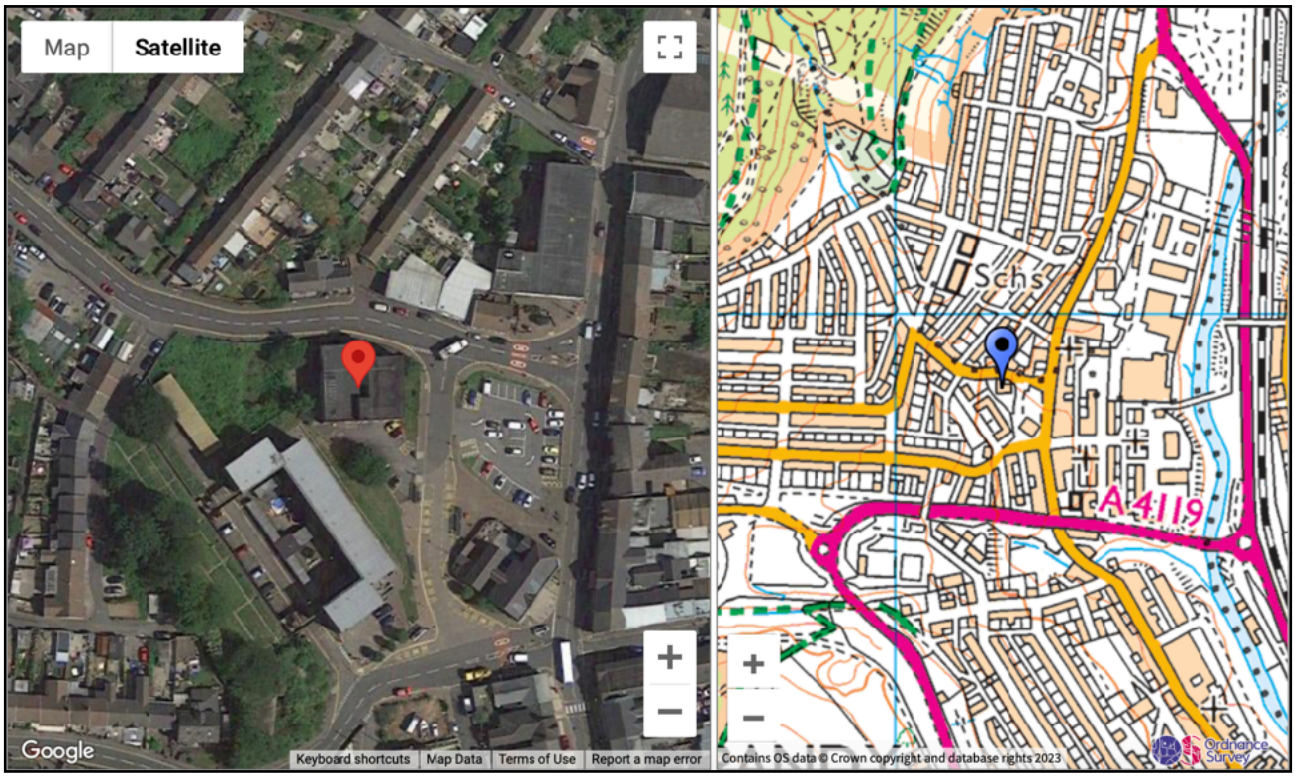
The site in its immediate environment.

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 9914 9290



Appendix 4 Site Photographs

Northern Elevation of the Extension

Northern Elevation of the Main Building

Western Elevation of the Extension

Eastern Elevation of the Main Building

Eastern Elevation of the Main Building

Southern Elevation of the Main Building with Undercroft Car Parking Area

Southern Elevation of the Extension

Small Area of Raised Lead Flashing to the Southern Elevation of the Extension

Western Elevation of the Extension

Small Aperture within the Ceiling of the Undercroft Car Parking Area