Bat Scoping Survey: Former Palace Cinema and Rhymes Day Nursery, Bedwlwyn Road, Ystrad Mynach

Instructed by: Wales and West Housing

Reported by: Ecological Services Ltd
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1.0 Background and Purpose

1.1 The former Palace Cinema and Rhymes Day Nursery is a terraced property situated in an urban environment along the residential and commercial street of Bedwlwyn Road in the town of Ystrad Mynach. The property is currently vacant and planning permission is sought to demolish the existing building and create an affordable housing development within the site boundary. This report will investigate if there is potential to disturb bats and will be used to assist in the planning process.

1.2 The report is prepared and undertaken by Mr. Richard Watkins BSc., an experienced Natural Resources Wales licensed bat ecologist with 15 years experience, license number S0931358-1.

1.3 A data search was undertaken with SEWBReC (0256-239) to provide information on local bat species in the area. The data search did not identify any historic records of bats being present within the building. The nearest recorded roosts are approximately 175m from the property which is an historic record for an unidentified bat species maternity roost from 1990; 325m from the property which is a record for a Pipistrelle Species *(Pipistrellus sp.)* maternity roost from 2010 and 350m from the property which is an historic record for a Pipistrelle Species day roost from 1991.

1.4 There are various non roosting records for bats, the nearest being approximately 145m from the property which is a field record for a Daubenton's Bat *(Myotis daubentonii)*; 325m from the property which is a field record for a Common Pipistrelle *(Pipistrellus pipistrellus)* and 360m from the property which is a field record for an unidentified bat species.

1.5 There are records for Common Toad (*Bufo Bufo*) approximately 90m northwest, House Sparrow (P*asser domestics*) approximately 80m east, Swift (*Apus Apus*) approximately 90m south east and Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) approximately 130m east.

1.6 The site does not lie within or directly adjacent to any statutory or non statutory designated site. There are non statutory designated sites within 1km of the site. There are 7 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) within 1km of site, the closest being the Coed Penalta and Railway Line SINC located approximately 260m to the north east. There are 14 areas of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) within 1km of site, the closest being approximately 270m north west of site.

1.7 The property is not within 1km of a designated SAC or SSSI for bats.

2.0 Site Description

2.1 The former Palace Cinema and Nursery is a terraced; stone building which is two storeys in height with a pitched slate roof. There are timber fasciae; soffits and barge boards present. To the rear (south east) of the building there is a small area of undeveloped land within the site boundary bounded by breeze block walls. At present this area has been used for storage with metal shipping containers, trailers and wood piles present. The remaining ground contains a mixture of bumble scrub and tall ruderal vegetation. Species noted within the area include false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*), hedge mustard (*Sisymbrium officinale*), buddleja (*Buddleja daviddi*), cocks foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), nettle (*Utica dioica*), creeping thistle (C*irsium arvense*), rosebay willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*) and nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*)

2.2 The property dates back to in excess of 80 years and is situated within an urban environment. There are likely to be moderate amounts of ambient lighting along Bedwlwyn Road, to the immediate north west of the property.

2.3 The nearest significant watercourse is Rhymney River, approximately 335m to the south east of the property, with a smaller watercourse, Nant Cylla, approximately 125m to the west of the property at their nearest points.

2.4 The property is situated in an urban environment along the residential and commercial street of Bedwlwyn Road in the town of Ystrad Mynach. Despite being situated in an urban environment, the town of Ystrad Mynach is surrounded by substantial amounts of open land and areas of forestry. There are riparian corridors along both of the watercourses in the area and there is excellent ecological connectivity for bats to the wider environment.

2.5 The National Grid Reference of the site is approximately: **ST 1467 9447**

3.0 Report Constraints

3.1 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.

3.2 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 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. Natural Resources Wales will only accept survey data up to two years old from date of issue for licence applications, although some Local Planning Authorities will only accept survey data up to eighteen months old. 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.

3.4 An internal scoping survey was not undertaken as internal access could not be gained. Activity surveys will be undertaken and internal access will be sought.

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 Scoping Survey

6.1 The external scoping survey was undertaken on the **11th July 2025** 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 small number of opportunities present for bats to access and use the building and those that were available were deemed as having moderate potential for roosting bats. There were raised slates and ridge tiles; areas of raised lead flashing and apertures between the soffits and the walls.

6.4 No droppings or evidence of bats were discovered on any external features.

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

6.6 Examples of apertures allowing access to cavities in the building:


Day Nursery
01443

7.0 Internal Scoping Survey

7.1 An internal scoping survey was not undertaken as internal access could not be gained. Activity surveys will be undertaken and internal access will be sought.

8.0 Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

8.1 No direct evidence of bat use was identified during the scoping survey.

8.2 The property is located in an area with excellent ecological connectivity for bats to the wider environment.

8.3 There is unlikely to be any ambient lighting within the vicinity of the property.

8.4 Due to the age and condition of the building, there were a small number of opportunities present for bats to access and use the building and those that were available were classed as having moderate potential for roosting bats.

8.5 The building does not offer significant hibernation potential for bats.

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

8.7 At least two bat activity surveys are recommended to establish the presence or absence of bats within the building. The general shelf life of activity surveys is eighteen months. Updated survey work may be required after this time.

8.8 A minimum of five experienced bat surveyors will be used to adequately cover the building during the emergence surveys. The surveys will conform to the "*Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, Good Practice Guidelines 2023"* and will be undertaken in the core maternity season for bats of May to August inclusive. The surveys will be undertaken in weather conditions conducive for bat activity. Suitable bat monitoring equipment will be used to acoustically analyse any bat calls which are present to allow for accurate species identification. Once the further surveys are completed, detailed mitigation and enhancement measures can be designed into the development.

8.9 If bats are found to be resident within the building, a development licence from Natural Resources Wales may be required for any works which affect the structure. This process is separate to planning consent and can only be applied for once planning consent has been granted.

Signed: *Richard Watkins* ***Date: August 2025***

9.0 Appendix

Aerial Site Photographs

OS Map

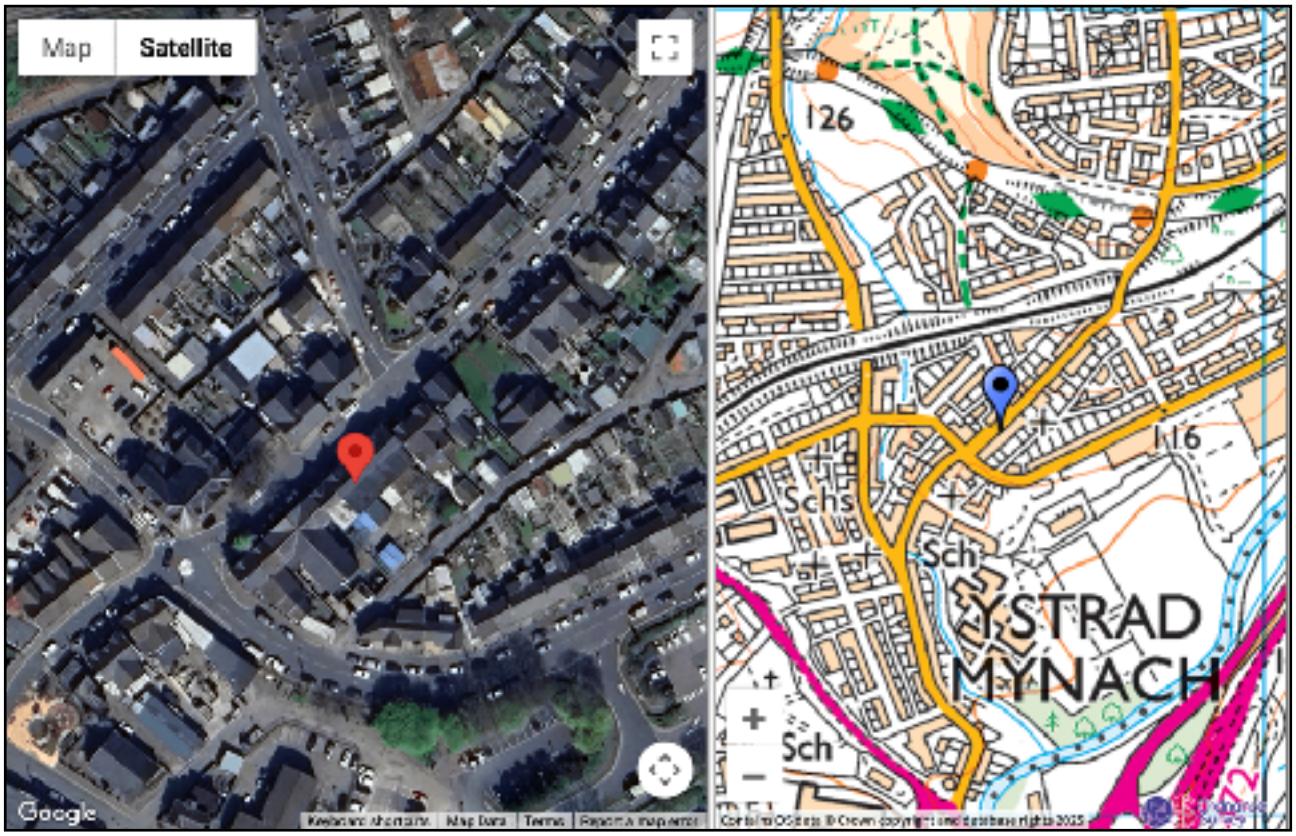
Site Photographs

Appendix 1 Aerial Site Photographs

The site in its immediate environment.

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

Appendix 2 OS Map National Grid Reference ST 1467 9447



Appendix 3 Site Photographs