

MERTHYR VALLEY HOMES

PROPOSED ROOFING REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS, PROPERTIES AT COUNCIL STREET AND URBAN STREET, MERTHYR TYDFIL

BUILDING INSPECTION REPORT (PROTECTED SPECIES)

MARCH 2022



soltysbrewster

4 Stangate House,
Stanwell Road,
Penarth,
Vale of Glamorgan,
United Kingdom.
CF64 2AA

Telephone:- 033 00 13 00 12
e-mail:- enquiry@soltysbrewster.co.uk
Web Site:- www.soltysbrewster.com

MERTHYR VALLEY HOMES

**PROPOSED ROOFING REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS,
PROPERTIES AT COUNCIL STREET AND URBAN STREET, MERTHYR TYDFIL
BUILDING INSPECTION REPORT (PROTECTED SPECIES)**

Document Ref: E22108101 MARCH 2022

Issue	Revision	Stage	Date	Prepared by	Approved by	Signed
1	-	Draft for Review	02 March 2022	Katie Godfrey (Snr Ecologist)	Dr. M Watts (Director)	
2	N/A	Final for Issue	19 August 2022	Katie Godfrey (Snr Ecologist)	Dr. M Watts (Director)	

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Methodology

Desk study

Building Inspection Survey

3.0 Results

Desk study

Building Inspection Survey

4.0 Legislation, Policies and Plans

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

References

Appendices

Appendix I Site location

Appendix II SEWBReC Data Search Results

Appendix III Site Notes & Photograph's (February 2022)

Appendix IV Ecological enhancement-Example nest boxes

SUMMARY

Soltys Brewster Ecology were commissioned by Merthyr Valley Homes (the client) to undertake an external building inspection at several properties at Urban Street and Council Street, Penydarren Merthyr in order to support a planning application for re-roofing works (this is likely to be required as both streets are in a Conservation Area).

Consultation with SEWBReC confirmed that the properties, and associated curtilage do not fall within or adjacent to a site designated for nature conservation. The data search returned a total of 80 records for bats within a 2km radius. The majority of these are for more common species such as Pipistrelles but there are also records for other species such as Serotine and Brown Long-eared bat. The nearest potential roost records is just over a 1km west of the site and there are no records for roosts at either Council Street or Urban Street. The data search returned a total of 23 records for nesting birds for 10 different species. Several of the species returned by the search all have the potential to nest at the properties for example Swift, House Sparrow, Starling and House Martin.

The daytime external inspection of the properties found several features suitable for use by bats. There were few potential access points to the internal space, i.e. the roofing space, by means of damaged fascia soffits.

The properties are classed as having low potential for roosting bats.

Under best practice guidelines (BCT 2016), structures of Low potential require a single emergence or re-entry survey to provide a robust appraisal of the likely presence/absence of roosting bats. These surveys are seasonally constrained with the optimal timing between May and August.

In the event that the re-roofing works is programmed between March and August, a follow up inspection (by an ecologist or appointed contractor) for nesting birds would be recommended to establish if any active bird nests were present prior to the start of works. Under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) all wild birds are protected against killing or injury and their nests against damage or destruction whilst they are in use or being built. If an active nest was identified, it would have to remain in place until such time as it was no longer in use.

This report details the methodology and results of the building inspection conducted. It draws conclusions and makes recommendations for enhancements for biodiversity that could be made within the proposal.

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Soltys Brewster Ecology were commissioned by Merthyr Valley Homes to undertake an external building inspection on 13 properties on Urban Street and 26 properties on Council Street, in the Penydarren area of Merthyr Tydfil. The two streets are in a Conservation Area and were built between 1895 and 1903. They are constructed of rough stone on the front elevations, terraced (on an incline) with pitched roofs, rear single storey extensions and back gardens.
- 1.2. The properties are situated in a settlement area of Penydarren, Merthyr Tydfil (Grid Ref SO0588807614). The properties are located in an urban area with a succession of parallel terraced streets of similar character to the north, south, east and west. The nearest public open space (POS) with semi mature/mature trees approximately 75m to the east and south east beyond and adjacent terraced street (District Street) and approximately 150 south of the site is Newland Park, a large mosaic POS on a reclaimed coal tip.
- 1.3. In order to inform proposed roof replacement/repair works the current report presents the findings of an ecological data search and external building inspection survey to identify any evidence of use by bats or nesting birds and advise on any required further survey, mitigation or licensing associated with the works.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1. In order to establish the baseline ecological conditions on site, a combination of desk-based consultation, and external building inspection survey were undertaken in February 2022. The scope of survey work was based on best practice guidelines (BCT, 2016).

Desk study

- 2.2. The desk study primarily involved consultation with the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) to identify any existing ecological records of bats or roof nesting birds in the surrounding area (2km radius for bats, 150m for birds). Given the extent of the proposed works (i.e. re-roofing), a wider search for designated sites and other species was not considered of benefit.

Building Inspection Survey

- 2.3. The fieldwork was undertaken on 10 February 2022 by a suitably experienced ecologist¹ and comprised of an external check of all visible elevations of the properties to identify Potential Roost Features (PRF) and any direct evidence (e.g. droppings, nest material etc.) of bats or nesting birds. The survey aimed to establish the potential of the properties to support roosting bats (or nesting birds) and identify any further survey requirements to re-roofing works.
- 2.4. External survey at the site involved the use of binoculars to identify possible access/entry points into the properties and aimed to identify any evidence of use by bats such as droppings, staining, prey remains etc. The survey was undertaken from ground-level around the properties with rear elevations being viewed from the rear access lane.

¹ Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management (MCIEEM) with experience of bat survey work (NRW bat licence no: S089154/1)

2.5 The surveyor searched for roost evidence (droppings, staining etc.) as described above and an assessment of the buildings potential to support nesting birds was also undertaken. The scope of the bat inspection survey, including timing, survey effort etc., was based on guidelines published by the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT, 2016). The potential of the building and any adjacent trees to support roosting bats was determined based on the following categories (BCT 2016):

- **Known or confirmed roost**
- **High** - A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use 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.
- **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 status.
- **Low** – A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically, or, a tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground or features with only very limited roost potential;
- **Negligible** – Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.

Constraints

2.7. During the survey internal access to the properties was not possible, however the bat species likely to be utilising the identified potential roosting features are crevice dwelling bats and internal evidence of these species is not always evident within properties, therefore this was not considered a major constraint to the initial assessment of the suitability of the buildings.

3.0 RESULTS

Desk Study

- 3.1 The site is not located within an area designated for nature conservation and there are no statutory designations (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest) relating to bats within the 2km search radius of the properties.
- 3.2 No records of bats were specifically associated with the site and immediate surrounding area (100m radius) although the SEWBrEC data search returned 80 bat records within 2km of the site with the closest bat records Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* 141m north of the two streets foraging in a rear garden of Hodges Street. Other records include Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus* (commuting) and Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, (784m east of the site).
- 3.3 A total of 23 records of roof nesting birds were returned with the data search. A Swift *Apus apus* nesting record from 2009 is associated with one of the properties on Urban Street (no evidence was noted during the survey). A single Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* record was identified within the 400m radius. The bird records were only provided at 1km grid square resolution and included species associated with buildings such as, House martin *Delichon urbicum*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, Great Tit *Parus major*, and Swift. The Peregrine Falcon record is associated with the town centre. The surveyed properties were not considered suitable for nesting by this species.

Building Inspection Survey

- 3.4 A summary of the site features and building inspection survey is provided in the following sections with further detail included in the notes and supporting photographs in Appendix III. No external evidence of bats (or nesting birds) was identified at the properties although several PRF's were present including damaged fascia/soffits, gaps running between the soffits and stonewall, raised lead flashing and slipped roof tiles. The features identified, in combination with the desk study records and the location/context of the properties were considered to offer limited potential for bats and the likelihood of roosting bats being present at any given time was considered to be low.
- 3.5 There is approximately a 5cm gap running the length of the wooden/uPVC soffits to the front of the properties (with the exception of property 12 Urban Street which has been filled). This is largely owing to the uneven stone work on the front of the properties. To the rear, the properties have predominantly been

rendered and painted with no obvious gaps between the soffits and the walls. There are generally less PRF's present compared to the front of the properties (Plate 1).

- 3.6 The gable ends have PRF's including gaps between soffit/fascia and wall and damaged fascia coverings. Roof and tiles are generally in good condition with a few slightly raised tiles on properties 14 and 56 Council Street and between properties 2 and 3 Urban Street. Slipped tiles are present to the front of properties 6 and 24 Urban Street and there is raised lead flashing around the flue of properties 26 and 27 Council Street.

The properties overall are considered to be of Low potential for roosting bats.

Other Site Features

- 3.7 There is no semi/mature trees/vegetation present in the rear gardens however several of the properties had bird feeders/bird feeding stations whereby House Sparrows and Blackbirds were noted during the survey (Plate 2)

Plate 1-View of the rear of the properties



Plate 2-View of rear garden gardens



4.0 LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND PLANS

- 4.1 The following legislation relating to bats and nesting birds is considered of relevance to the area surveyed and to the proposed re-roofing works of the properties.

Environment (Wales) Act, 2016

- 4.2 Part 1 of the Environment Act Wales came into force in May 2016 and sets out the approach to planning and managing natural resources at a national and local level with a general purpose linked to statutory 'principles of sustainable management of natural resources' defined within the Act.

Section 6 - Biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty

- 4.3 Section 6 of the Act places a duty on public authorities to 'seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity' so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions. In so doing, public authorities must also seek to 'promote the resilience of ecosystems'.

Section 7 - Biodiversity lists and duty to take steps to maintain and enhance biodiversity

- 4.4 This section lists living organisms and types of habitat in Wales which are considered of key significance to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in relation to Wales. The Welsh Ministers are required to take all reasonable steps to maintain and enhance the living organisms and types of habitat included in any list published under this section, and encourage others to take such steps.

Legislation Pertaining to the Protection of Bats

- 4.5 Under Annex II of the *Council Directive 92/43/EEC 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora* (EC Habitats Directive) some bat species are listed as of Community Interest, the conservation of which requires designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); Under Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive all bat species are listed as of Community Interest, in need of strict protection. In England and Wales, the EC Habitats Directive has been transposed into law in 1994 and, following recent amendments is set out in the *Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulation 2017* to give bats, their breeding sites and resting places a high level of strict protection making it an offence (subject to certain specific exceptions) to deliberately capture or kill/injure a bat, to damage or destroy a place used for shelter or protection or to deliberately disturb a bat in such a place. Case Law has placed an onus on local planning authorities to satisfy 'three tests' under the Habitats Directive when determining applications that could affect European Protected Species. Essentially, these three tests are: i) that there is no satisfactory alternative; ii) that the proposed development is in the over-riding public interest (including those of a social or economic nature) and iii) the proposed development would not adversely affect the Favourable Conservation Status of the species locally
- 4.6 Bats are also afforded protection within England and Wales under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Legislation Pertaining to Birds

- 4.7 Under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) all wild birds are protected against killing or injury and their nests against damage or destruction whilst they are being built or contain eggs/dependent young.

Local Planning Policy

- 4.8 The Replacement Local Development Plan (2016-231) underwent examination in Public in 2019 and was adopted by Council on 29th January 2020. Policies relevant to the proposed works are outlined below:

Policy EnW2: Internationally and Nationally Protected Sites and Species

Development proposals likely to affect protected species will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that:

- 1. The population size, range, distribution and long-term prospects of the species will not be significantly adversely impacted;*
- 2. There is no suitable alternative to the proposed development;*
- 3. The benefits of the development clearly outweigh the adverse impacts on the protected species; and*
- 4. Appropriate, avoidance, minimisation, mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures are provided.*

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Bats

- 5.1 The combination of desk study & site inspection surveys has established that there was no evidence of current or historical use by bats (or birds) at the properties surveyed. However, there were sufficient potential roosting features present and as such, the properties are considered to have **low potential** to support roosting bats. Similarly, no evidence of recent use by nesting birds was identified.
- 5.2 Under best practice guidelines (BCT 2016), structures of Low potential require a single emergence or re-entry survey to provide a robust appraisal of the likely presence/absence of roosting bats. These surveys are seasonally constrained with the optimal timing between May and August. For these properties, we would recommend that these surveys are programmed from r May 2022. The surveys would be undertaken by a team of 3 surveyors for each street, strategically placed to achieve maximum coverage. In the event that a roost was identified, further survey may be required to confirm the species and likely status of the roost. No works to properties where bats were identified could be undertaken until a licence (from Natural Resources Wales) was in place.
- 5.3 If further survey finds no evidence of use by roosting bats, a precautionary approach to the roofing works would be recommended to include the following:
- Contractors briefed prior to the start of roofing works on the low likelihood that birds or bats could be present and the action to take if a bat were discovered. In the unlikely event that a bat were discovered at any point during removal of existing roof, all work will stop immediately and an ecologist contacted for advice on how to proceed;
 - Removal of roof tiles, ridge sections and (if required) fascia boards to be undertaken using hand-held tools (crowbars, claw hammers etc.) in the first instance under ecological supervision.;

Birds

- 5.4 In the event that the re-roofing works is programmed between March and August, a follow up inspection (by an ecologist or the appointed contractor) for nesting birds would be recommended to establish if any active bird nests were present. Under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) all wild birds are protected against killing or injury and their nests against damage or destruction whilst they are in use or being built. If an active nest was identified, it would have to remain in place until such time as it was no longer in use. As

set out in 5.4, where possible, any proposed works to the roof or associated coverings i.e. soffits/fascia's should be undertaken in autumn or winter so as to avoid conflict with nesting birds.

- 5.5 In order to provide enhanced nesting opportunities as part of the development, 6 surface mounted bird boxes would be recommended on the existing properties. This could include 2 Swift nesting boxes, 2 Sparrow terraces and 2 House Martin nest cups.(See Appendix IV). Any mitigation, licensing or enhancement measures relating to bats would be informed by the emergence surveys recommended at Section 5.2).

REFERENCES

Bat Conservation Trust (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. 2014. *Council Street and Urban Street Conservation Area. December 2014*

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. *First Replacement Local Development Plan 2016-2031*.

APPENDIX I SITE LOCATION

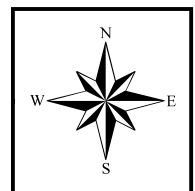
Housing Stock Transfer - Plan No. 17



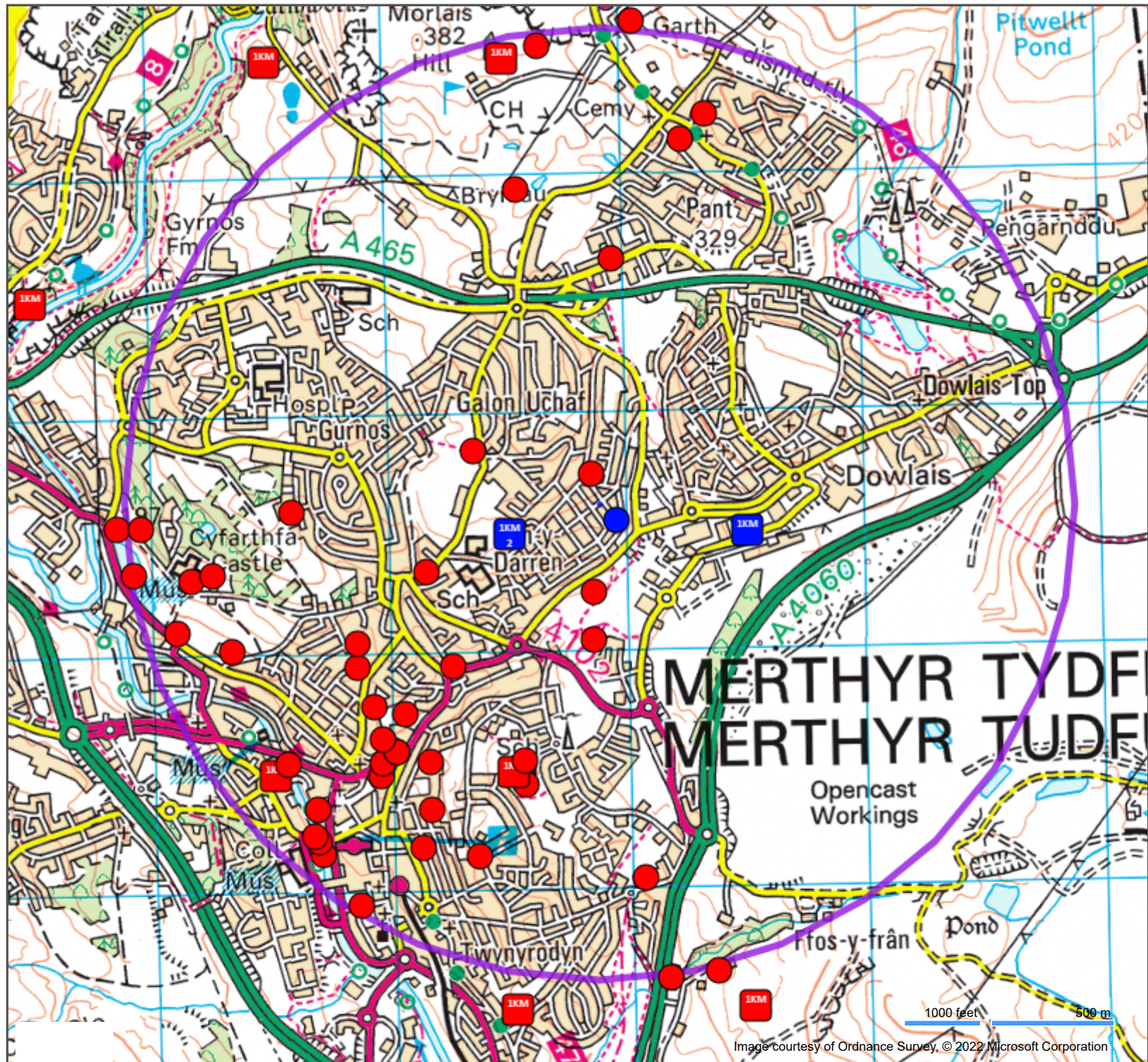
Produced by Estates Division
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Ty Keir Hardie
Riverside Court
Avenue De Clichy
Merthyr Tydfil
CF47 8LW
Licence No. 100025302

Scale
1:1,250

*This document is based upon
Ordnance Survey material.
Crown Copyright Reserved.
Reproduction in whole or in part
is prohibited without the written
consent of Ordnance Survey*



APPENDIX II SEWBREC DATA SEARCH RESULTS



Aderyn
LERC Wales' Biodiversity &
Reporting Database



eMapper for LERC Wales Aderyn Commercial

katie-godfrey_09/02/2022_urban-street-and-council-street-pen...
/ 4289/0212-830

Key

- Search Location
- Search Buffer (2000m)

- Birds
- Mammals

APPENDIX III SITE NOTES & PHOTOGRAPHS (February 2022)

Site visit notes

Date: 10 February 2022

Weather conditions: Sunny, dry 2°C

Other observations:

Birds noted include in the rear garden vegetation of the Council Street House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* and Blackbird *Turdus merula*.

General description:

Located in a built-up area of Merthyr Tydfil. Houses are terraced with stone/brick to the front of the properties. To the rear of the properties is a single storey extension and back garden. The rear of the properties has been rendered. Chimney breasts present of most properties.

Street	Property No.	Comments Photos
Council Street	6	>5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the property.
	12	Gap between soffit covering and stone wall has been filled.
	13	5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the property.
	14	Slightly raised roof tile. 5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the property. 
	16 & 17	Fairly large gap in soffit to the front of the property between property 16 and 17. 5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the properties.. Roof in tact, no raised/missing tiles. 
	19, 20, 21, & 22	5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the property

	 Gable end of 22 has several gaps and damaged soffit. 
25 & 26	Slightly raised lead flashing between 26/27. 5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the properties. 
28	5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the property
30	Fairly large gap on north eastern corner of the gable end. 5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the property 

32, 33, 34, 35 &36	Damaged guttering/soffit between property 34 &35.  5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the properties. 
37	Gap between soffit and stone wall on the gable end. 
39	5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the property.
41	5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the property.
42	5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the property.
44	5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the property
51	Slightly raised roof tile to the front of the property,
56	Slightly raised roof tile between 55/66 on the front of the property. 5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the property To the rear of the property a damaged roof tile and raised lead flashing around chimney breast.

			
Urban Street	1,2,3,& 4	5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the properties. Slightly raised tiles on the rear roof between properties 2 and 3.  Soffit/fascia on gable end of property 1 slightly damaged on SW corner. 	
	6	5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the property. Damaged fascia covering to the front of the property. Dropped tiles present above fascia.	

			
11		5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the property.	
16		5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the property.	
18		5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the property.	
24		5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front and gable end of the property Slipped tiles above the guttering to the front of the property.	
			
30, 31 & 32		5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the properties Soffit damaged in the SW corner facing corner of the gable end of property 31.	



Fascia and soffit damaged on the front of property 30



Damaged fascia and soffit covering on the NE corner of the gable end of property 32.



Damaged fascia and soffit covering on the NW corner of the gable end of property 32.

		
36	5cm gap between soffit covering and stone wall to the front of the property. Damaged fascia/soffit to the front of the property between 35 & 36.	

APPENDIX IV ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT-EXAMPLE NEST BOXES

[Madrid Swift Nest Box \(wildcare.co.uk\)](http://wildcare.co.uk)



[Woodstone Sparrow Nest Box \(wildcare.co.uk\)](http://wildcare.co.uk)



[Eco House Martin Nest Box \(wildcare.co.uk\)](http://wildcare.co.uk)

