

Bats & Trees Survey Report



Project: Goetre Field School, Merthyr Tydfil

Instructed by: Morgan Sindall

Reported by: Ecological Services Ltd
10 Mount Pleasant, Llanelly Hill, Abergavenny, Monmouth NP7 0NT
Reported by

Author	Checked By	Date	Version
Beth Lewis	Ash Harris	12th February 2024	V1.0

T: 07494250372

E: Beth@ecologicalservices.wales

W: www.ecologicalservices.wales

Contents

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Ground Based Visual Roost Assessment of Trees
- 3. Recommendations and Mitigation
- Reference List
- Appendix 1 - Tree Photographs

1. Introduction

The applicant is seeking permission to develop a parcel of land adjacent to Goitre Lane, Merthyr Tydfil. The site is located on the northern outskirts of Merthyr Tydfil town in the county borough of Merthyr Tydfil. Current proposals include the construction of a new primary school and associated hardstanding and playing areas to be constructed within the grassland plateau on site.

An Updated Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) of all land within the development boundary was completed by Ecological Services Ltd in July 2023. The PEA report highlighted a number of ecological considerations that would be required should development plans for the site progress. One consideration was the use of the site by bat species therefore bat surveys of any trees have been proposed prior to any removal or pruning.

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) was undertaken by Arboricultural Technician Services Ltd, the AIA dated 6th November 2023. The development proposals will require the loss of a small number of trees scattered around the site. Tree locations can be found within the ArbTS AIA report (November 2023).

Ecological Services Ltd were instructed to undertake bat surveys within the proposed development site to inform the proposed development at site. Advice on surveying trees for bat use can be found in the BCT Survey Guidelines 2016 (2nd Edition).

1.1 Site Description

The proposed development site comprises a parcel of land to the north east of the wider site boundary and is centred at NGR SO0515708293. The proposed development site sits within a wider plot of land. The site lies adjacent to Pen Y Dre School in the north and Goitre Lane in the south and west, beyond which lies the Gurnos Estate. To the east lies Galon Uchaf Housing Estate. In the south, south east and south west the wider landscape is dominated by residential dwellings and associated infrastructure with the town of Merthyr Tydfil approximately 1.8 km to the south of the site. To the north just beyond Pen Y Dre School lies the A465, the landscape beyond comprises open countryside with hedge bound fields, small areas of woodland and open moorland.

1.2 Survey Constraints

No survey constraints were experienced during the ground level tree assessments of trees (GLTAs). The survey visit was undertaken at an optimal time of year when no leaves were present on the trees and visibility around each tree was possible.

1.3 Surveyor Experience

Beth Lewis is an associate member of Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Beth is an ecologist with 6 years experience undertaking a wide range of flora and fauna surveys. All survey work is undertaken following JNCC Phase 1 Survey Guidelines and CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2nd Ed 2017).

Vicky is an ecologist with at least nine years' experience. She has worked in larger consultancies previously completing a wide range of flora and fauna surveys, completed professional training courses and attended informal botanical meetings to gain valuable knowledge. This experience allows Vicky to assess and identify common habitats as per the JNCC Phase 1 Survey Guidelines. Vicky is also a licenced dormouse and great crested newt worker and holds licences from Natural Resources Wales for both species.

1.4 Legislation

All British bats are a European protected species and are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In summary, they are protected from:

- Deliberate capture, killing and injuring,
- Deliberate disturbance of a breeding site or resting place,
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place.

Schedule 5 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) also protects all species of British bat and their roosting locations. British bats are protected from intentional or reckless disturbance and or obstruction of their roosting places. Barbastelle, Bechstein's, Noctule, Brown long-eared, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, greater horseshoe and lesser horseshoe bats are also listed in section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which makes them a key species to sustain and improve biodiversity.

2. Ground Level Tree Assessment for Bat Roost Suitability

An assessment of trees for their potential bat roosting suitability should start with a ground level tree assessment. The aim is to assess, via visual inspection and binoculars, for features which bats could use. The surveyor is looking for any cavity, gap or crack in the tree which bats could use for roosting purposes.

All trees proposed for removal or to be affected by the development proposals were subject to a GLTA. For was of reference the tree numbering used within the ArTS report is used within this report. Whilst many of the trees will remain, they could be subject to noise and light disturbance from the proposed works and development. Therefore for the purposes of this section of the report all trees are subject to the same level of survey work.

2.1 Survey Methodology

Each tree was subject to a GLTA on the 12th February 2024. This is an optimal time of year to undertake such surveys as the leaf cover is at its minimum so features high up within the tree can be seen.

The surveyors stood at the base of each tree and visually inspected it using close focusing binoculars. The tree was categorised into NONE, FAR or PRF bat roost potential based on the features observed. An extract of Table 4.2 and 6.2 from the BCT Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines 2023 (4th Edition) is given below on how trees should be categorised.

Suitability	Description of Roosting Features
NONE	Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any
FAR	Further Assessment Required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree
PRF	A tree with at least one PRF present
PRF-I	Tree with PRFs which are only suitable for individual or very small numbers of bats due to size of lack of suitable surrounding habitat
PRF-M	Tree with PRFs which are / is suitable for multiple bats. Maternity colony maybe present

Table 1 - Bat Roost Categories for Trees

2.2 Survey Results

All trees surveyed within the site had **NONE** bat roost suitability with no potential roost features identified. See Table 2 for result and Appendix 1 for tree photographs. An extract of

the Tree Protection Plan form ArbTS is provided in Appendix 2 with the trees and tree groups surveyed.

Tree No.	Tree Tag	Species	PRF Height	PRF Aspect	PRF Type	DBH	Bat Roost Suitability	Notes
T1	-	Hawthorn	-	-	-	Approx. 10 cm	None	Along fence line. 2 main trunks. No potential roost features (PRFs) present.
T2	-	Hawthorn	-	-	-	Approx. 10 cm	None	Along fence line. Multi stemmed with sprawling branches. No PRFs present.
T3	-	Hawthorn	-	-	-	Approx. 10 cm	None	Along fence line. 2 main trunks with sprawling branches. No PRFs present.
T4	-	Ash	-	-	-	Approx. 20 cm	None	Within corner of site along fence line. 2 stems. No PRFs present.
G1	-	Common Lime	-	-	-	Approx. 20 cm	None	Outside of fence line on grassy road verge. 4 main trunks. No PRFs present.
G2	-	English Elm	-	-	-	Approx. 25 cm	None	Along fence line. Multi Stemmed. No PRFs present. Large limb on ground, not attached. Cutting work undertaken on remains attached end of stem leaving no splits or jagged points at end.
G3	-	Common Lime	-	-	-	Approx. 25 cm	None	Outside of fence line on grassy road verge. 3 main trunks. No PRFs present.
G4	-	Goat Willow	-	-	-	Approx. 30 cm	None	Within waterlogged ground. 2 separate trees, both multi stemmed with sprawling branches. Callous rolls extending upwards from base of tree. No gaps or crevices behind rolls to allow for shelter of any kind. No PRFs with suitability present.
G5	-	Goat Willow	-	-	-	Approx. 35 cm	None	Large trunk that extends into multiple stems at approx. 1 m high. No PRFs present.
G6	-	Hawthorn mixed scrub	-	-	-	-	None	Thin stemmed scrub line. No PRFs present.

Table 2 - Tree Assessment Information

2.3 Survey Recommendations

All **NONE** bat roost suitability trees can be removed without further consideration to bat roosting use.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

Survey work has been undertaken to establish the presence or likely absence of roosting bats within trees outlined in the ArbTS (2023) AIA report. The proposed development works within the site boundary will result in the loss of some trees to create a suitable access into the development site and also to accommodate the building of the development itself. Based on the Arboricultural Impact Assessment dated 6th November 2023 4 trees (T1-T4) and 6 groups of trees (G1-G6) are within the site boundary for Goetre Primary School School development. The AIA report outlined T1 and T4 will be likely removed.

All trees within this site (T1, T2, T3, T4, G1, G2, G3, G4, G5 and G6) were found to have no bat roost suitability. All can be removed with no further consideration to bat roosting use.

Reference List

- Bat Conservation Trust (2016) '*Bat surveys for Professional Ecologists; Good Practice Guidelines*' (2nd Edition)
- Henry Andrews (2018) '*Bat Roosts in Trees: A Guide to Identification and Assessment for Tree-care and Ecology Professionals*'
- ArbTS (6th November 2023) '*Arboricultural Report; Goetre Primary School, Merthyr*'

Appendix 1 – Tree photographs



Photograph 1. T1. Hawthorn. Negligible bat roost suitability.



Photograph 2. T2. Hawthorn. Negligible bat roost suitability.



Photograph 3. T3. Hawthorn. Negligible bat roost suitability.



Photograph 4. T4. Ash. Negligible bat roost suitability.



Photograph 5. G1. Common Lime. Negligible bat roost suitability.



Photograph 6. G2. English Elm. Stem on ground with cut end attached. Negligible bat roost suitability.



Photograph 7. G3. Common Lime.
Negligible bat roost suitability.



Photograph 8. G4. Goat Willow. View from
west aspect. Negligible bat roost suitability.



Photograph 9. G4. Goat Willow. View from
east aspect. Callous rolls extend from base
of stems with no gaps or crevices present.
Negligible bat roost suitability.



Photograph 10. G5. Goat Willow. Negligible
bat roost suitability.



Photograph 11. G6. Hawthorn and mixed scrub.
View from north of site.

Appendix 2 – Tree Locations

