

29.09.22



Mr. Matthew Edwards
36-37 Fox Street
Treharris
Merthyr Tydfil
CF46 5HE

By e-mail

Our Reference: LT117-LPEA

Dear Mr. Edwards

Re: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PRA) of 36-37 Fox Street, Treharris

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Little Wing Ecology (CYF) was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of a site known as, '36-37 Fox Street, Treharris, Merthyr Tydfil, CF46 5HE.' The survey was undertaken to identify any constraints, and associated planning requirements with regards to protected species, and to inform a planning application. For the purposes of this report, this structure will be referred to as, 'the Site.' The property is located at: ST 09961 97109.

The Site included a building and rear garden. It is a mid-terrace Victorian building, previously two units, now knocked through into one. This is an urban plot of approximately $\approx 11\text{m} \times \approx 20\text{m}$, is traditionally built with stone and brick. Materials include a bitumen-based roofing membrane, timber bargeboards, plastic guttering, timber bargeboards and lead flashing. A preliminary roost assessment and bat activity survey have previously been conducted at the building (Please refer to the associated report). The Site is located on a main service (Fox Street) within the eastern portion of the village of Treharris.

Planning permission is sought for the renovation of a former commercial building.

The purpose of this survey was to:

- Consider the Site's position in relation to local habitat features, connectivity, and the wider environment.
- Establish any potential direct or indirect effects upon the Site by the proposed development.
- Provide an informed overview of the habitat(s) on the Site.
- Identify the potential use of the Site by protected/priority species through the identification of supporting habitat features, field signs, or other relevant information.
- Consider if there will be impacts on protected/priority species from the proposed works.
- Consider if protected/priority species are present which might be affected by the proposed development.
- Gather sufficient information to be able to make appropriate recommendations, inform mitigation and further species-specific survey (if necessary).
- Provide solutions to enhance the development by suggesting features to create a net-gain for biodiversity.

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Taken from associated bat report (September 2023)



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SECTION TWO: THE SURVEY METHOD

Personnel & Survey Details

A field survey was undertaken on Friday 22nd September 2023 by Elizabeth Winstanley. Weather conditions were overcast with intermittent sunshine followed by showers. Elizabeth is a Nature Recovery Officer within a large Conservation Organisation and a surveyor with Little Wing Ecology. She has over eight years' experience working in practical conservation and has undertaken numerous surveys and monitoring projects, including work on butterfly transects, phase 1 habitat surveys, reptile and amphibian surveys, upland monitoring, BTO bird box round, dormouse training and recording, bumblebee conservation – bee walks and many more. Currently Liz is responsible for the management of seven Nature Reserves including four SSSI's. Liz has also attended several training sessions to develop her knowledge, understanding and practical skills in ecology and conservation.

Preliminary Habitat Assessment

Prior to visiting the Site, pre-existing information relevant to the location was assessed as part of the desktop survey. This included, but was not limited to:

- The utilisation of the Magic Map, incorporating some habitats and protected sites e.g., special areas of conservation, sites of special scientific Interest etc.
- Study of OS maps and aerial photography through Google Maps.
- The website of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for details on designation reasons of protected sites.
- An assessment of known data relating to previous surveys within the vicinity of the Site (by Little Wing Ecology and others) was also carried out. Only those species records occurring within the last ten years were considered relevant although consideration was taken of earlier records.

A habitat assessment was made using standard phase 1 habitat techniques as the guiding principle. The surveyor(s) walked a rough zig-zag style pattern, making notes systematically and methodically of the habitat and conditions of the Site. This was then followed by a circuit/loop of the relevant site boundaries with additional notes being made where necessary. Photographs were taken of the Site's boundaries along with areas of interest and areas that characterised the habitat present on Site.

During the survey, the potential for protected species was assessed and any signs and/or evidence of its use was noted. This included, but was not limited to:

- Nesting potential for birds at the time of the survey, with the surveyor(s) looking for signs of bird activity, nests, nest building, feeding at nest sites, and evidence of collections of bird droppings, feathers, or any other indications of use by birds.
- Features such as piles of rubble, banks or tree roots that could be used as refugia or hibernacula for reptiles and hedgehogs.
- Water bodies that could provide opportunities for amphibians and/or reptiles.
- Physical signs of other relevant species (if seen), such as droppings and/or latrines, footprints, hair, food remains or foraging marks.
- Features that could be utilised by bats e.g., hollows in trees, peeling bark etc.
- Any flora or fauna that may be endangered or protected under the Countryside Act.
- Identify potential commuting and foraging corridors, and suitable foraging sites. This enables the suitability of the Site for bats to be determined.

Legislation

Under Regulations 9 (1 & 5) of the Habitat Regulations, local authorities have a duty to have regard for the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This includes maintaining populations of European Protected Species in "favourable conservation status", and potential for such protected species (for example, bats) should be considered when carrying out a preliminary assessment.

The framework for this protection is provided within several pieces of legislation from the Government of Wales and the UK Government. Furthermore, several pieces of legislation exist that are specifically relevant to individual species. These include:

- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) - as amended.
- The Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) - as amended.
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Limitations of the Survey Method

Access was available to all areas of the Site. However, due to the uneven nature of the ground and many obstacles such as large refuse items it was awkward to walk the whole site. At any given time of year, it is not possible to identify all plant species by conducting a single visit, as different species emerge and flower at different times of the year. The sward height, management regime and weather conditions can hinder the identification of specimens. This being said, it is possible to classify habitats and identify many species throughout the year in most circumstances. The baseline conditions described in this report were accurate at the time at which the survey was undertaken.

SECTION THREE: RESULTS

Designated Sites

There are no non-statutory sites, such as Site important for Nature Conservation (SINC), on the proposed development site, however, there are several SINC in close proximity to the Site. The closest and most significant is Afon Bargoed Tâf, located 150m south-east. The Afon Bargoed Tâf flows south-west through a mature broadleaved woodland and joins the Afon Tâf (≈720m downstream). In addition, there are three SINC in close proximity, Cwm Bargoed/Lower Cwm Bargoed, Coed Edwardsville/Edwardsville Woods and Trelewis (ancient woodland).

For an assessment of bat interest at the Site, please refer to the accompanying bat survey report.

The findings of the preliminary habitat survey of the building are detailed in Table 1.1 (below).

Habitat

Habitat in the immediate vicinity of the structure is mixed, comprising other buildings, and made surfaces, such as roads and pavements. The frontage (north-west elevation) is exposed to high levels of artificial lighting while the rear of the structure presents darker space with a mixture of urban and natural vegetation continuing relatively unbroken to the Tâf Bargoed river (150m south-east). The Tâf Bargoed flows south-west through a mature broadleaved woodland and joins the Afon Tâf (≈720m downstream). The settlement of Treharris extends continuously as ribbon development >1.6km to the west (merging with Edwardsville), ≈275m (north) and ≈620m east, beyond which the landscape opens up to habitat with an upland characteristic.

The survey location was examined by consulting Magic Map. No part of the site contains, or is within, any statutory sites of nature conservation interest, such as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) or Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). There are no Sites of Species Scientific Interest (SSSIs) on or adjacent to the Site.

The nearest SSSIs is, 'Nelson Bog,' which is located ≈1.km south-east of the Site. The nearest National Nature Reserve is Glaswelltiroedd Aberbargoed/Aberbargoed Grasslands located ≈6.4km to the north-east, a portion of which is also

designated as a special area of conservation.

Phase 1 Habitat	Category	Field Notes	Photography
Disturbed ground / Amenity land (J1.2) & Walls (J2.5)	Urban plot, cleared of most vegetation Stone Walls	Previously an unmanaged overgrown plot. Now cleared of most vegetation. Old stone walls, rubble and litter.	



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Species List & Target Notes

The rear of the property is southeast facing and measures approx., 12m x 10m. Formerly two gardens, this area is comprised of disturbed ground, old stone walls, rubble and litter, interspersed with goat willow (*Salix caprea*), sycamore (*Pseudo platanus*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*) saplings and butterfly bush (*Buddleja Davdii*). Along the southeastern boundary there is an old stone wall and two large Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) stumps/coppice stools (Target Note 1) overlooking a small pedestrian path below. Amongst the rubble, E. (Target Note 2) there is sparse vegetation which consists of bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), ivy (*Hedera helix*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), herb robert (*Geranium robertianum*) rough hawksbeard (*Crepis biennis*) and maidenhair spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*). During the survey there was limited evidence of wildlife. However, a small tortoiseshell butterfly (*Aglais urticae*) and garden spider (*Araneus diadematus*) were recorded.

SECTION FOUR: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

No part of the Site contains, or is within, any statutory sites of nature conservation interest, such as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) or Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) etc. Therefore, the proposed scheme of works will not impact on any rare or valuable habitats as the works are due to remain within the site boundary.

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal survey recorded one habitat type on-site, one feature and four target notes were made. Low botanical diversity has been recorded on the Site and the nature conservation significance is considered negligible.

Satellite imagery identified a limited degree of connectivity to the south. To prevent any adverse impact upon the potential roosting, commuting and foraging habitats for bats adjacent to the Site (post development), specifically at the southern elevation, overlooking the Afon Bargoed Tâf (SINC), the lighting plan for the site must be functional and directional only and kept to a minimum servicing the public areas of the proposed development (as required for safety and security).

No evidence was recorded for protected or priority species on-site during the survey. Based upon the results from the desktop survey, field survey, the uncompensated re-development impacts are considered to be low. In these circumstances, no specific restrictions or limitations apply. No additional survey work is required at this time and works can continue as planned.

No evidence for protected or priority species was recorded during the on-site survey. However, there is potential nesting opportunities for birds within the large ash coppice stools and dense Ivy. A precautionary approach must be followed.

Amphibians are considered likely absent from the Site which is considered unsuitable for breeding animals. There are limited opportunities for hibernation on-site but a lack of connectivity to suitable waterbodies. A cautionary approach should be adopted when work is undertaken in this area.

Reptiles are considered likely absent from the site. However, the site provides a limited potential for hibernation and foraging. There are numerous records for reptiles within 1km of the site therefore, a cautionary approach is recommended.

There are several records for hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) within 1km of the site. The Site offers limited potential for foraging and hibernation therefore, a cautionary approach should be adopted.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this report, it is recommended that the following conditions be included in the plans. These recommendations include enhancement features. These enhancement features are designed to support 'net gain' for biodiversity onsite, or off-site (if the proposed development cannot accommodate such requirements *in-situ*).

Recommendation 1 (Finger-tip search)

A suitably competent ecologist is required to carry out a careful, detailed check of all features likely to be impacted, no more than 24 hours prior to works commencing at any time of year for hedgehogs, other mammals, amphibians and reptiles. Dismantling of stone walls to be undertaken by hand, stones to be lifted not scraped.

Recommendation 2 (Nesting Birds)

All nesting birds, their chicks' eggs and active nests are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). If a nest is discovered during works and is active, it must be left undisturbed until all the chicks have fledged. If any features associated with nesting birds are required to be altered during the bird breeding season, then a further inspection by a suitably qualified ecologist is required no more than 24 hours before this process commences. If an active nest is found by a site inspection, an exclusion zone around the nest will be necessary to preserve this feature until the chicks have fledged the nest.

These measures will allow the development to conform to current protective legislation as laid out in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (plus amendments).

Recommendation 3 (Enhancements Features)

Under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, public authorities (including local councils and the National Parks), 'must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of those functions.' This replaces the section 40 duty in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act 2006), in relation to Wales, which states that; 'All public authorities have a statutory duty to conserve biodiversity in all of their functions.'

Local authorities are legally required to make efforts to protect and enhance wildlife and its habitat and this is executed, in part, through the requirement of an ecological assessment for planned development sites and, therefore, we recommend the following principles of design must be followed:

Birds/Insects

- A standard tree of a native species (e.g., Mountain Ash, Hawthorn or Crab Apple) or alternatively a native hedgerow to be included in the designs at the southeastern boundary.
- A variety of bird and bug boxes installed as directed by a competent ecologist.
- Providing a food source for invertebrates (native wildflower mix) should be included at the site.
- A pond is considered unsuitable for the site (which will be used as a creche). However, providing a water source will be of benefit to visiting wildlife. This can be created using something as small as a paint roller tray, allowing it to fill with rain and adding pebbles or stones for invertebrates to land on in order to drink.
- Two Schwegler 1SP Nest Boxes (or similar) to be fitted at a height of >3m on the eastern elevation of the proposed new unit (Appendix).

Hedgehogs

Gates and fences installed should include a 13cm x 13cm hole at ground level to allow access for hedgehogs. Enhancement for the local hedgehog population to be provided in the form of; No1 Vivara Pro WoodStone Hedgehog House (or similar) at the southern corner of the Site*¹. No1 Eco Hedgehog Hole Plate (or similar) to be fitted at the

¹ The location of these enhancement features to be identified under the direction of a suitably qualified ecologist.

base of each new garden fence*¹ to mitigate against defragmentation locally.

SECTION FOUR: CLOSURE & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Little Wing Ecology (CYF) has prepared this Report for the sole use of the above-named Client or his Agents in accordance with our terms of business, under which our services were performed. No other warranty, expressed or implied, is made as to the professional advice included in this Report or any other services provided by us. This Report may not be relied upon by any other party without the prior and express written agreement of Little Wing Ecology (CYF).

The assessments made assume that the site(s) and facilities will continue to be used for their current purpose without significant change. The conclusions and recommendations contained in this Report are based upon information provided by others and upon the assumption that all relevant information has been provided by those parties from whom it has been requested. Information obtained from third parties has not been independently verified by Little Wing Ecology (CYF).

Many protected and priority species are opportunistic animals and will exploit any opportunity for shelter if it arises and the conditions are favourable. If at any point during works a protected or priority species is encountered on-site, it is essential that all work is to cease and that a suitably experienced ecologist is contacted for advice. Should works not start within two years (i.e., September 2025) further survey and assessment will be necessary to qualify the results of this report and its recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

E. Winstanley

Elizabeth Winstanley BA, (Hons)
Ecologist
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