

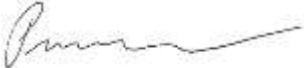
BUILDING INSPECTION
OF
16 OLD ROAD, SKEWEN, NEATH



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Site Address	Cross Keys Hotel, 16 Old Road, Skewen, Neath, SA10 6AR
Report type	Building Inspection
Client	Gareth Hemming
Project number	001GENU100

The material and data in this report were prepared under the supervision and direction of the undersigned.

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VALIDITY

Due to the dynamic nature of ecological conditions the results of the survey(s) and related conclusions and recommendations as contained within this report should only be considered **valid for up to 1 year from the date the last survey was undertaken.**

Any alterations to the site proposals may invalidate the recommendations contained within this report.

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Non-Technical Summary

Abricon was commissioned by Gareth Hemming to undertake a building inspection in respect of bats and nesting birds on the building formerly in use as the Cross Keys Hotel, 16 Old Road, Skewen, Neath, SA10 6AR.

The aim of the survey was to identify whether the site has evidence of, or potential for, bats and/or nesting birds to be present. The survey results will inform recommendations for mitigation, and/or further survey work, as appropriate.

It is understood that the proposed development includes the complete renovation of the interior of the building to accommodate a change of use from a public house to offices. This will include reconfiguration of the internal spaces and the rebuilding of the first-floor ceiling, creating a second-floor room. Two skylights are anticipated to be installed in the roof. This will involve small sections of localised removal of the roof lining and tiles only where the skylights will be installed. The existing entrance porch on the eastern side is anticipated to be removed, and a new one constructed on the northern side of the building. The metal shed in the garden is anticipated to be demolished.

The building inspection has identified that further actions will be required on the site. Details of these required actions are summarised in the table below:

Species/Groups	Phase	Action(s) Required
Bats	Construction	Localised removal of roofing materials for skylights overseen by licenced bat ecologist as outlined in 5.2.
Birds	Site preparation	Construction works, demolition of the shed and clearance of vegetation following timings and methods outlined in 5.3.
Ecological Enhancements	Design and Construction	Inclusion of bat and bird boxes as outlined in 5.4.

1 Introduction

1.1 Survey Aims & Objectives

- 1.1.1 Abricon was commissioned by Gareth Hemming to undertake a building inspection in respect of bats and nesting birds on the building formerly in use as the Cross Keys Hotel, 16 Old Road, Skewen, Neath, SA10 6AR.
- 1.1.2 The aim of the survey was to identify whether the site has evidence of, or potential for, bats and/or nesting birds to be present. The survey results will inform recommendations for mitigation, and/or further survey work, as appropriate.

1.2 Site Location & Description

- 1.2.1 The site is located off Old Road in the village of Skewen, Neath Port Talbot at National Grid Reference: SS 73127 97345.
- 1.2.2 The site consists of a commercial building, previously in use as a hotel/public house, with associated paved car park and small overgrown garden. Within the garden is a small metal shed.
- 1.2.3 The site is immediately bordered by a patch of amenity grassland and an overgrown area of scrub and semi-mature trees to the north. The site is bordered by Old Road to the south, and by residential properties and their associated car parks, gardens and buildings to the east and west.
- 1.2.4 Within the wider landscape, the site is surrounded by residential and commercial properties, roads, gardens and driveways in all directions. Neath Abbey lies approximately 400 m north east of the site, and the Tennant Canal lies approximately 175 m south east of the site at its closest point.

Figure 1.1 – Site Location – accessed on 21/05/2020



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1.3 Proposed Development

- 1.3.1 It is understood that the proposed development includes the complete renovation of the interior of the building to accommodate a change of use from a public house to offices. This will include reconfiguration of the internal spaces and the rebuilding of the first-floor ceiling, creating a second-floor room. Two skylights are anticipated to be installed in the roof. This will involve small sections of localised removal of the roof lining and tiles only where the skylights will be installed. The existing entrance porch on the eastern side is anticipated to be removed, and a new one constructed on the northern side of the building. The metal shed in the garden is anticipated to be demolished/removed and garden area present north of the building is proposed to be maintained as garden/outdoor space.

2 Methodology

2.1 Building Inspection

- 2.1.1 The building on the site was inspected internally and externally on the 20th May 2020 by Doug Sands and Jana Prapotnikova (NRW Bat licenced surveyor – Level 2) in order to identify any evidence of use by bats and nesting birds.
- 2.1.2 To assist in a thorough search for bats the following equipment was used;
- Binoculars;
 - Million candle power spotlight (Clulight CB2);
 - Head torch;
 - Digital camera.

Bats

- 2.1.3 Signs of bats looked for include;
- Bats (alive or dead);
 - Droppings;
 - Staining;
 - Feeding signs;
 - Smell; and
 - Social calling.
- 2.1.4 The building was also inspected for their suitability to be used by roosting bats, with any potential features which could be used by roosting bats being recorded.

Nesting Birds

- 2.1.5 Signs of nesting birds looked for include;
- Birds (alive or dead);
 - Nests (current or disused)
 - Droppings;
 - Feeding signs;
 - Eggs.

2.2 Personnel

- 2.2.1 Doug Sands has been working in environmental consultancy since 2018. Doug's primary experience includes protected species surveys.
- 2.2.2 Jana Prapotnikova has worked in consultancy sector since 2006 with a focus on mammalian ecology, particularly bats and badgers. Jana runs Abricon's Ecology Department as well as being involved in project delivery. She has managed various ecological projects and has expertise in a range of ecological survey techniques including Phase 1 habitat assessments and a variety of protected species surveys (e.g. the aforementioned mammal species as well as reptiles and great crested newts). Jana also devises ecological mitigation schemes for a variety of protected species. She is well versed in producing preliminary ecological appraisals, BREEAM/CSH Ecology Assessments, protected species licences, Ecological Impact Assessments (EclA), Construction Environmental Management plans, Biodiversity Enhancement Schemes and Ecological Design Strategies. Jana holds Natural England and Natural Resources Wales Class 2 licence for bats as well as Natural England Class and Natural Resources Wales Class 1 licence for great crested newts. She is also a Registered Consultant of the Bat Low Impact Class Licence (BLIC) and holds a CSCS card.

2.3 Limitations

General Ecological Constraints

- 2.3.1 This survey only offers a "snapshot" of the site conditions and takes no account of seasonal differences, or of any species which may take up residence subsequently.

Site Specific Constraints

- 2.3.2 It was not possible to access the metal shed in the garden due to the density of vegetation and rubbish surrounding it. However, reasonable view of the shed and part of its interior was possible from the adjoining garden wall with the aid of a ladder.
- 2.3.3 No landscape plans were available at the time of writing the report.

3 Results

3.1 Building Description

- 3.1.1 See Appendix C for pictures of the building.
- 3.1.2 The building is a two-storey brick-built former hotel/public house – derelict and in a state of disrepair at the time of the survey. There is a two-room cellar beneath the ground floor. All four pitches of the hipped roof are clad in flat clay tiles which are in good condition, fit tightly and show no signs of damage or lifting. There are some small gaps between the walls and the wooden soffit boards of the main building, the most significant of which are on the eastern and western elevations.
- 3.1.3 There is a small entrance porch at the centre of the eastern side of the building. The flat roof of this porch is clad in bitumen felting which is in good condition, as are the plastic fascia and soffit boards surrounding the porch.
- 3.1.4 There is a flat-roofed single storey extension on the western elevation of the building. The roof of this extension is clad in bitumen felting, which is in good condition, as are the plastic fascia boards.
- 3.1.5 Internally, the building is in a state of disrepair. None of the internal walls or ceiling are present on the second floor. Bitumen felt underlay lines the roof, and is in good condition except for 2 tears identified, however the ceiling of the second floor has been removed so there is no roof void. A large section of flooring is missing in the south western corner of the first floor of the building. Two windows (northern elevation ground floor and first floor) are left permanently open or have missing panes. Majority of the windows on the ground floor are boarded up with plywood boards for security (windows on the first floor are not boarded up). However, a hole/window opening (30cm x 30cm) is present in the wall of the single storey extension on the western elevation of the house.
- 3.1.6 There is a metal cellar hatch directly outside the building on the eastern side. It is mostly covered by debris and vegetation. Some gaps are present around its edges, leading into the cellar.
- 3.1.7 The garden shed was inspected remotely from the garden wall. The walls and roof are constructed from asbestos type material and corrugated metal. The doorway is permanently open with no door attached.

3.2 Bats

- 3.2.1 No bats or evidence of bats was found during the building inspection.
- 3.2.2 However, features were present on the exterior and interior of the building that were considered to be suitable for use by bats for roosting. These included:
- Space between the underlay and roof tiles
 - Cellar
 - Interior of the building.
- 3.2.3 Access points to these features included:
- Gaps between the walls and soffit boarding – Northern, eastern and western elevations.
 - Gaps around the metal cellar hatch
 - Open/missing windows.

3.3 Nesting Birds

- 3.3.1 No birds or evidence of nesting birds were found during the building inspection.
- 3.3.2 The interior of the building has the potential to support nesting birds in the roof spaces among the beams where the ceiling is missing. Access to the interior is in the form of open windows.

3.4 Other Protected Species

- 3.4.1 There were no indications during the building inspection that any other protected species may be using the building or may be impacted by the development.

4 Evaluation and Impacts

4.1 Bats

- 4.1.1 All bat species are protected by UK and EU legislation (see Appendix A).
- 4.1.2 No bats or evidence of bats was identified during the building inspection. The main roof is in good state of repair with tight fitting tiles throughout however, gaps were present between the walls and soffit boards on the eastern, western and northern elevations, potentially leading to spaces/crevices within the roof.
- 4.1.3 Narrow gaps (3cm or less) were present in and around the metal cellar hatch, however those were completely covered/blocked by either vegetation and/or debris on the outside or cobwebs on the inside.
- 4.1.4 The site is in a relatively built-up location and is surrounded by roads, industrial units, residential buildings and hardstanding in every direction. The abundance of associated lighting is likely to deter light sensitive species and therefore limit the potential of the building as fewer species of bats are able to utilise the identified roosting spaces. It is therefore considered that if bats are using the building to roost, they are likely a light tolerant crevice dwelling species.
- 4.1.5 When taking all factors into account, including location, it is considered that the building has a **low-negligible potential** to support roosting bats.
- 4.1.6 The main roof is in good state of repair and doesn't require repairs or reroofing, however two skylights are proposed to be installed on the eastern aspect of the roof involving localised removal of tiles and lining for the skylight openings. The only potential (it is not possible to ascertain if this gap leads to any roof cervices) access to the roof crevices (between the lining and the tiles) is through the gap between the soffit and the wall on 3 elevations. Therefore, it is considered very likely that there will be **no adverse impact** on bats as a result of the proposed works in the building and the skylights installation.
- 4.1.7 The shed in the garden is considered to be unsuitable for bats due to lack of suitable bat roosting features and the light interior.

4.2 Nesting Birds

- 4.2.1 All birds within the UK are protected whilst nesting.
- 4.2.2 The building's interior has features that have the potential to support nesting birds in the form of roofing beams and interiors.
- 4.2.3 The garden space present north of the building has also potential to be used by nesting birds, however this space is proposed to be maintained as garden/outdoor space following development.
- 4.2.4 There is a ready availability of suitable habitat for nesting birds nearby (other residential gardens, trees, hedgerows).
- 4.2.5 It is therefore considered that the site is unlikely to be of more than **low local value to birds**.
- 4.2.6 Without mitigation, the proposed works on the house and the maintenance works of the garden vegetation may result in the destruction of nests and possible killing, injury, and disturbance of birds and/or dependent young. This would therefore constitute a **certain long-term adverse impact**.

4.2.7 With mitigation, it is anticipated that there can be a **no/low impact** on these species.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1.1 The building inspection highlighted the need for further actions with regards to some species. Table 5.1 below provides a summary of the works required, whilst details are provided in the following paragraphs.

Table 5.1 – Table of Further Actions

Species/Groups	Phase	Action(s) Required
Bats	Construction	Localised removal of roofing materials for skylights overseen by licenced bat ecologist as outlined in 5.2.
Birds	Site preparation	Construction works, demolition of the shed and any clearance of vegetation following timings and methods outlined in 5.3.
Ecological Enhancements	Design and Construction	Inclusion of bat and bird boxes as outlined in 5.4.

5.2 Bats

- 5.2.1 Although, the building has low potential to support roosting bats, further surveys for bats are not considered necessary as proposed works are unlikely to have any impacts on roosting bats.
- 5.2.2 It is considered unlikely (although possible) that bats will be encountered and/or affected by the minor skylight works, however as a precaution it is recommended that the removal of the localised sections of roof tiling and underlay (for the installation of the two skylights) is carried out under the supervision of licenced bat ecologist.
- 5.2.3 If any bats or evidence of bats are found during the development, all work should immediately cease and a licensed bat worker contacted for further advice. It will be necessary to inform Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and it may be necessary to obtain NRW development licence. Development will not be allowed to recommence until authorised by NRW.

5.3 Nesting Birds

- 5.3.1 Due to the size of the site and the scale of the development, further surveys for birds are not considered necessary.
- 5.3.2 However, the development and any vegetation removal should be carried out outside of the breeding bird season. The breeding season is influenced by the climactic conditions of a given year but is generally taken to be between March and August.
- 5.3.3 If the development works are required to take place between March and August (inclusive), affected areas should be checked by an ecologist before works can take place, and if birds are found to be nesting, clearance and the development would have to be delayed until nesting had ceased.

5.4 Enhancements and Planning Policy

- 5.4.1 Enhancement features for wildlife should be included in new developments to meet the recommendations contained within the National Planning Policy Framework 2018.

- 5.4.2 It is recommended that one bat box (Schwegler 1FF bat box or similar) and one bird box (Schwegler 1SP sparrow terrace or similar) are installed on the external walls of the building. The bat box should be placed as high as possible on the southern elevation of the building. The bird box should be placed as high as possible on the eastern or northern elevation of the building.

6 References

Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* 3rd edition. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Hundt L. (2012). *Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines* 2nd Edition. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Mitchell-Jones A. J. & McLeish, (2004) *Bat Worker's Manual*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

Mitchell-Jones A. J. (2004) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

7 Appendix A – Wildlife Legislation & Policy

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

- 7.1.1 Certain species are known as European Protected Species (EPS) and these are fully protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017). The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) is the transposition of the European Habitats Directive (1992) to UK legislation. Species protected under this legislation include (but is not limited to) bats, dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius*, great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*, otter *Lutra lutra*, sand lizard *Lacerta agilis*, and smooth snake *Coronella austriaca*.
- 7.1.2 For European Protected Species, it is a criminal offence to:
- Deliberately capture, injure or kill any such species;
 - Deliberately disturb wild animals of any such animal;
 - Deliberately take or destroy their eggs;
 - Damage, destroy, or obstruct access to a breeding site or resting place, whether the animal is present or not;
 - Keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange, any live or dead wild animal of a European Protected Species, or any part of, or anything derived from, such an animal.
- 7.1.3 Operations which will affect European Protected Species may require a development licence from the relevant national statutory body for nature conservation, which provides a derogation for an otherwise unlawful activity.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

- 7.1.4 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) makes it a criminal offence to:
- Kill, injure, or take any wild bird (with exceptions to species listed in Schedule 2);
 - Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while in use or being built;
 - Take or destroy an egg of any wild bird;
 - Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild animal listed on Schedule 5;
 - Interfere with places used for shelter or protection, or intentionally disturbing animals occupying such places.

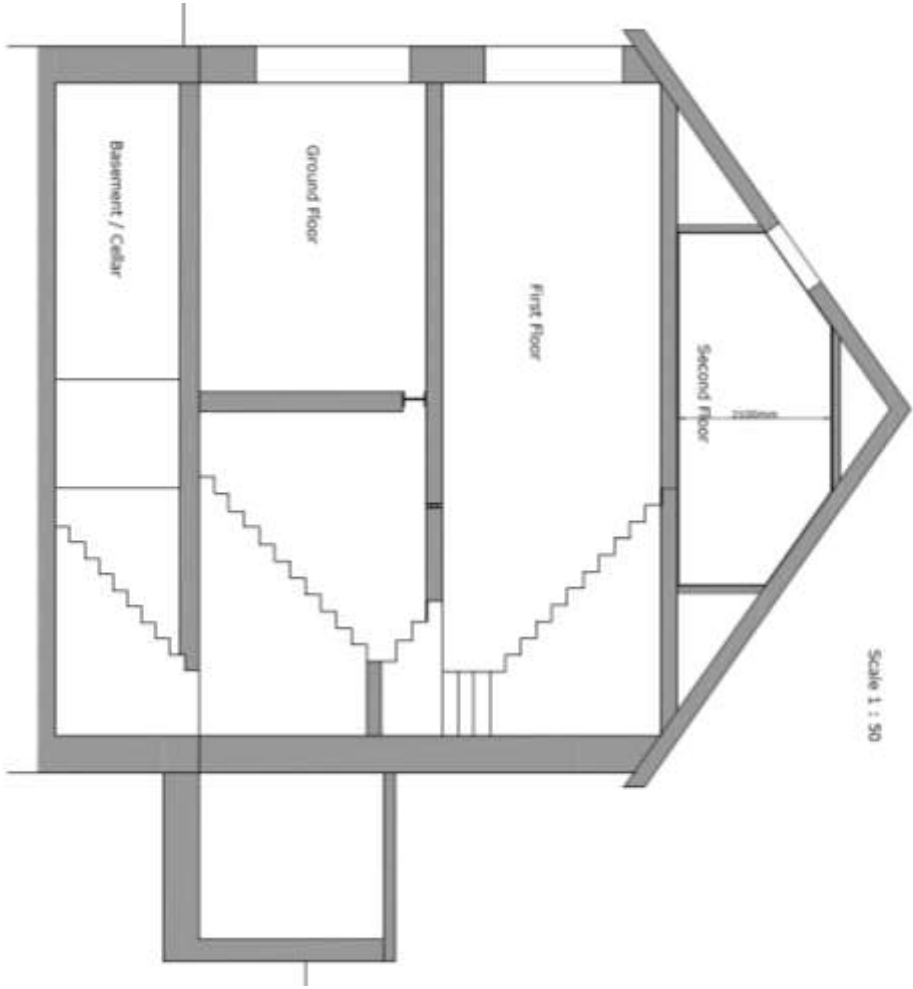
Protected Sites

- 7.1.5 Within the UK, certain sites are afforded protection measures based on their level of importance to wildlife. They fall into two categories; statutorily designated sites and non-statutorily designated sites.
- 7.1.6 Statutorily designated sites are typically of national or international importance and as such are afforded the greatest levels of protection under various pieces of legislation. Statutory sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), National Nature Reserves (NNR), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and RAMSAR sites.
- 7.1.7 Non-statutorily designated sites are normally designated by local authorities and are typically of local or county wide importance for their conservation interest. Non-statutory sites include Listed Wildlife Sites (LWS), Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS), Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI).

- 7.1.8 Properties of non-governmental organisations such as Wildlife Trusts may also be managed for their importance to biodiversity. These areas often have no statutory basis, but often comprise part of a designated site.

Environment (Wales) Act 2016

- 7.1.9 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 requires that all public authorities, when carrying out their functions in Wales, must seek to “maintain and enhance biodiversity” within the normal delivery of their functions and they must also seek to “promote the resilience of ecosystems”.
- 7.1.10 This should ensure that maintaining and enhancing biodiversity is an integral part of the decisions that public authorities take in relation to Wales. It also links biodiversity with the long-term health and function of Welsh ecosystems, therefore helping to align the biodiversity duty with the framework for sustainable natural resource management provided in the Act. This is an Act, i.e. domestic legislation – so is not subject to the EU (Withdrawal) Bill/Act.



Conservation of Green spaces and the historic character of the site and the surrounding area. The drawing is a plan view of the site and the surrounding area. The drawing is a plan view of the site and the surrounding area.

Scale 1 : 50

Original drawing
provided by the
client.

Drawing Date:

May 2020

Title:

8

Appendix B – Proposed Site Plans

Scale:

Not to scale

9 Appendix C – Site Photographs



Photograph 1 – First floor of the building, taken from the northern end looking south.



Photograph 2 – First floor of the building, taken from the southern end looking north.



Photograph 3 – First floor window on northern elevation, access point to the inside of the building as it has been left open.



Photograph 4 – interior view of the roof, with ceiling missing, taken from the first floor.



Photograph 5 – ground floor room in the single storey extension on the western side of the building. Showing access point to the interior of the building.



Photograph 6 – Cellar hatch, taken from inside the cellar. Showing access points to cellar in the form of gaps around the hatch.



Photograph 7 – Ground floor window on northern side of the building. Access point to the interior as it has missing panes.



Photograph 8 – Soffit boarding on the northern elevation, with gaps present beneath.



Photograph 9 – Overgrown garden area and shed to the north of the building, taken from first floor window.



Photograph 10 – Small garden shed constructed of asbestos type material and corrugated metal, taken from garden wall.