

Pontardawe Arts
Centre
Herbert Street
Pontardawe
SA8 4ED



An Ecological Survey
Report By:



On Behalf Of:



October 2021

Client	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Project Name	Pontardawe Arts Centre, Herbert Street, Pontardawe SA8 4ED
Report Title	An Ecological Survey Report
File Reference	BAT4120

Status	Name	Position	Date
Author	Miriam Wearing BSc (Hons)	Trainee Ecologist	28th September 2021
Reviewer	Phillip L Morgan CEnv MCIEEM	Assistant Principal Ecologist	4th October 2021

Contents

	Page No.
1 Executive Summary	1
2 Introduction	1 – 2
3 Survey Team Experience	2 – 3
4 Survey Methodology	3 – 4
5 Site Description	4
6 Desktop Study	4 – 5
7 Survey Constraints	5
8 Survey Results	5 – 6
9 Discussion and Conclusions	6 – 7
10 Recommendations	7 – 8
11 References	8
Appendix I: Site Plans	9 – 11
Appendix II: Survey Results	12
Appendix III: Evidence of Bat Roosts	13 – 15
Appendix IV: Site Photographs	16 – 17
Appendix V: Ecology of British Bats	18
Appendix VI: Relevant Legislation	19 – 20

List of Tables

Table	Description of Contents	Page
Table 1	Survey Team Experience	2 – 3
Table 2	Summary of Survey Activity and Weather Conditions	5
Table 3	Summary of Survey Results	6
Table 4	Pontardawe Arts Centre, Pontardawe – Dusk Observation 27 th August 2021	12
Table 5	Pontardawe Arts Centre, Pontardawe – Dusk Observation 14 th September 2021	12

List of Figures

Figure	Description of Contents	Page
Figure 1	Site location plan	9
Figure 2	Plan of proposals, Cinema Option 1	10
Figure 3	Site layout plan	11
Figure 4	Observer locations at Pontardawe Arts Centre	14
Figure 5	Bat Emergence Activity	15

List of Plates

Plate	Description of Contents	Page
Plate 1	Front west elevation of plant room	16
Plate 2	South-west end of plant room, gaps at edge of tiles and within soffit	16
Plate 3	Gaps along edge tiles on south-west end of plant room	16
Plate 4	North-east elevation of plant room, location of bat dropping at apex and gap at edge tile	16
Plate 5	Plant room interior, facing north-east	16
Plate 6	South elevation of storeroom and studio theatre	16
Plate 7	Lifted roof tiles and gap beneath lead flashing of storeroom	16
Plate 8	Interior of storeroom	16
Plate 9	West sloping roof of studio theatre, lifted slate tiles	17
Plate 10	Interior of studio theatre	17
Plate 11	South elevation of the main building	17
Plate 12	Front elevation of main building	17

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Plans are being prepared for the extension of the Pontardawe Arts Centre, to accommodate a new toilet, circulation space, and cinema. The building will be extended into a courtyard to the south, and roof alterations may also be required for a plant room. The primary objective of this report is to highlight any ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the proposals which might arise in relation to bats and birds.
- 1.2 A Preliminary Roost Assessment was completed during the day on the 10th November 2020. Assessment found a low number of bat droppings inside and on the external gable end wall of the plant room. Since the proposals have the potential to impact bats and their roosts, additional follow survey with summer activity observations was recommended. As a result, two dusk emergence observations were conducted in August and September 2021, to provide a higher degree of accuracy of the presence of any bats or birds at the property.
- 1.3 The first dusk observation in August 2021 noted a bat roost within the main roof, at an east facing gable end; supporting two common pipistrelle bats. There was little other bat activity in the area other than some foraging to the south-east of the building. The second dusk observation in September 2021 found a second bat roost under the ridge tile at the apex of the gable end of the studio theatre; used by a single common pipistrelle bat. Other bat activity at the site was consistent with the first observation.
- 1.4 No bat emergence activity occurred from the plant room during the summer 2021 observations and the presence of a low number of pipistrelle bat droppings are attributed to historic and opportunistic activity. When the nature conservation significance of the site is considered against recognised criteria (Bat Mitigation Guidelines 2004 and Good Practice Guide: Natural Resources Wales Approach to Bats and Planning October 2015), the nature conservation status of the site is assessed to be low due to the presence of a low number of animals of a common species (common pipistrelle) and no confirmed breeding colony.
- 1.5 Bats are fully protected in British legislation, as well as their places of rest, known as roosts. The current confirmed proposed changes to the building are unlikely to have a direct impact on the recorded roost. However, if scaffolding needs to be erected in front of either roost this could obstruct access to the entrances. Therefore guidance is provided in this report to avoid detrimental impacts to the roost. At the present time there is no intention to make any changes to either of the roof areas where the roosts are identified. If this factor changes then a European Protected Species licence will be required, which can be obtained from Natural Resources Wales. This licence must be issued before any alteration to the roof and fascias at the gable end walls of the studio theatre or the east facing gable of the main roof takes place. Advice relating to this potential future situation is included within this report.
- 1.6 A thorough assessment has been completed and no additional survey effort is recommended. A European Protected Species licence is not considered necessary at this time under the current plans for modifying the property.
- 1.7 No evidence for nesting birds was recorded during the assessment. However, two gaps within the plant room, were noted as being suitable for nesting birds. The site also offers potential for roof-nesting gulls, on top of the main building. All nesting birds are protected under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Therefore, birds must not be disturbed or their nests destroyed when they are active during the breeding season between March and August inclusive.
- 1.8 In order to comply with current planning policy (PPW10), it will be necessary to provide enhancements for biodiversity so that the site offers features to support wildlife. General proposals for measures to promote wildlife and nature conservation are contained in this report to be provided within the design of the re-developed site

2 Introduction

- 2.1 Plans are being prepared by architects Childs and Sulzmann Ltd., for the extension of the Pontardawe Arts Centre into a courtyard to the south. This will allow for the provision of a new toilets, a circulation space, and cinema. These works will require the demolition of the small storeroom section, which is currently attached to the studio theatre and south side of the main building. Roof alterations may also be required to the plant room as part of the development

proposals (see Figure 2). Exact plans were not available at the time of writing this report. Just Mammals Limited was commissioned to assess the ecological value of buildings and their suitability for protected species. The buildings are located at National Grid Reference (NGR) SN 72314 03971, at an altitude of approximately 34m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

- 2.2 The primary objective of this report is to highlight, as far as reasonably possible, any development risks that might arise in relation to bats and nesting birds at the Pontardawe Arts Centre. More specific objectives of this assessment include the following:
- consider the presence of bats or the potential for bats to be roosting in the building;
 - determine the presence of nesting birds in the building;
 - assess whether bats or nesting birds are likely to be impacted by the proposed works, and;
 - gather sufficient information to be able to make appropriate recommendations.
- 2.3 This report provides the survey data for the PRA conducted in November 2020, as well as the two dusk emergence/activity observations, completed in August and September 2021, and makes conclusions and recommendations from those results.

3 Survey Team Experience

- 3.1 The lead surveyor is Diane Morgan. Assisting with the survey was Miriam Wearing, who is also the author of this report. Table 1 below describes ecological experience of the surveyors.

Table 1: Survey Team Experience

Name	Licences	Experience
Diane Morgan BA (Hons) ACIEEM Senior Ecologist	S087512/1: expiry January 2022	Diane is an Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (ACIEEM). She has considerable experience (nearly 30 years) of surveying built structures for bats and has carried out ringing of Daubenton's bat as part of a multi-year project on the species and has undertaken monitoring work on several important lesser horseshoe bat roosts and assisted in radio tracking projects on the same species. Prior to current role. She was the Director of Brecknock Wildlife Trust and was involved in a wide range of nature conservation work including species and habitat protection and conservation land management. Other areas of interest include otter, dormice, water voles, reptiles, amphibians, fungi and crayfish. Diane is a Senior Ecologist with Just Mammals Limited
Andrew Ross BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM Senior Ecologist	S087519/1: expiry January 2022	Andrew has over ten years of experience working as an ecological consultant with considerable experience working to safeguard wildlife at a range of development projects. As well as being a Full member of CIEEM, Andrew also carries EPS licences for surveying bats (Level 2), dormice (Level 1) and great crested newts (Level 1) in England and Wales. Being certified in tree climbing and aerial rescue techniques, Andrew can also assess potential roosting features from height. Andrew is also certified as a Professionally Qualified Person under the ROLO (Registration of Land based Operatives) Health & Safety scheme. Between 2017 and 2019, Andrew worked very closely with the Bat Conservation Trust on their Bat Mitigation Project where he investigated the success of numerous bat mitigation schemes in England and Wales many years after compensation roosts were created. He is a Senior Ecologist with Just Mammals Limited
Robert Morgan Ecologist (TE)	S087709/1: expiry February 2022	Over sixteen years' experience with bats (NRW licence holder), carrying out roost surveys, emergence surveys, radio tracking of lesser horseshoes and monitoring of important sites. He holds a City & Guilds Level 2 award for working in Medium Risk Confined Spaces. Rob has expertise in respect of dormice with 22 years' experience monitoring dormouse boxes at a Local Nature Reserve and surveying for dormice at various other sites (NRW licence holder). He has experience surveying for otters, water voles, reptiles, amphibians, birds, particularly barn owls, and marsh fritillary butterflies. Robert is an Ecologist with Just Mammals Limited
Phoebe Williams BA (Hons) Student CIEEM Assistant Ecologist		A Geography graduate from the University of Exeter, and a former trainee at Gwent Wildlife Trust Phoebe has completed a Natural Talent trainee programme, studying Hemiptera at the National Museum of Wales. Practical experience includes survey work for dormice, botany, newts, reptiles, and invertebrates. She has also carried out practical habitat management work whilst volunteering for Gwent Wildlife Trust. Phoebe is undertaking an MSc in Wildlife and Conservation Management at the University of South Wales. She is an Assistant Ecologist with Just Mammals Limited

Miriam Wearing BSc (Hons) Trainee Ecologist (TE)		Miriam is a BSc (Hons) graduate of Ecology from Aberystwyth University. She is currently undertaking an MSc in Wildlife and Conservation Management, and is a Trainee Ecologist with Just Mammals Limited
Nigel Isaksson Senior survey Assistant (TE)	S089854/1: expiry July 2023	Nigel has fourteen years' experience undertaking bat surveys, flight line observations, census counts. Nigel holds an NRW licence to disturb bats, and is also licenced to disturb dormice, and is a Senior Survey Assistant with Just Mammals Limited
Nic Aldridge BSc (Hons) MSc Senior Survey Assistant (TE)	S089980/1: expiry July 2022	Following a degree in Botany and Zoology, Nic completed an MSc in Wildlife Management, Conservation and Control, both at the University of Reading. He has practical experience of field based research with a focus on invertebrate and vegetation diversity and has produced Phase 1 habitat surveys and habitat management plans. He has attended courses with the Bat Conservation Trust to improve his knowledge and skills and has led voluntary projects to develop habitats and collect species data. Nic is a Senior Survey Assistant with Just Mammals Limited
Ben Gibson BA (Hons) Survey Assistant (TE)		A graduate of Cambridge University with a degree in Natural Sciences, Ben specialised in Plant Science in his final year studies. Ben is a Survey Assistant with the Just Mammals Limited with thirteen years' experience of undertaking bat surveys flight line observations, and census counts

Note: Detectors

TE = Time expansion (Pettersson D-240X)

4 Survey Methodology

- 4.1 Sites of nature conservation interest within 2km of Pontardawe Arts Centre were identified using the web-based MAGIC database (www.MAGIC.gov.uk). These included sites with statutory designations of international importance (Special Areas of Conservation SACs, Special Protected Areas SPAs and Ramsar sites) and sites of national importance (Sites of Special Scientific Interest SSSIs and National Nature Reserves NNRS).
- 4.2 The PRA was completed on 10th November 2020, to assess its suitability for roosting bats and nesting birds. Assessment included a day-time visual assessment of the internal and external parts of the plant room, studio theatre, the south section of the main building, and the small storeroom, with the aim of assessing suitability and detecting any signs of bat presence. External survey involved examining outer surfaces and looking for signs of bat presence including bat faeces (droppings) on walls, ledges, doors and sills. A high-powered torch was used to examine potential access and roosting areas. Any gaps or crevices in the structure were inspected as closely as possible. The context of the building within the surrounding area was also considered at this time.
- 4.3 Internal survey included the examination of a single loft void within the storeroom and internal areas of the plant room and studio theatre. This internal space was checked for the presence of live bats, the remains of dead bats (including dead juveniles and babies, which might indicate the presence of a maternity site), and signs of bats, including faeces (droppings) on floors, etc. Urine staining, both on paintwork and window glass or staining on timbers caused by oil from bat fur were also searched for, as well as discarded fragments of insects such as wings.
- 4.4 Two dusk bat emergence/activity observations were undertaken by a team of experienced observers, who were equipped with a Pettersson D-240X machine. These devices are particularly sensitive and excellent at separating species which employ the middle range frequencies for foraging (45 – 55 kHz). They are therefore very good at identifying the different pipistrelle species (*Pipistrellus* sp.) and the different myotis bats* (*Myotis* sp.) (*myotis bat is a collective term used where the species could not be specifically identified beyond this broad group). The myotis group encompasses seven species of British bat including Alcahove's (*Myotis alcathoe*); Bechstein's (*M. bechsteinii*); Brandt's (*M. brandtii*); Daubenton's (*M. daubentonii*); greater mouse-eared (*M. myotis*); Natterer's (*M. nattereri*); and whiskered bat (*M. mystacinus*).
- 4.5 The Pettersson D-240X can be used in heterodyne or time expansion modes, and for the purposes of this survey, only the time expansion facility was used. The received signals were then recorded to a Roland RO-5, recording device for later analysis. The time expansion method is similar to making a high speed tape recording of a bat's ultrasonic call and then playing it back at a slower speed. Digital technology is used to make the recording and slow it down for play back. Since the signal is stretched out in time, it is possible to hear details of the sound not audible with other types of detector.
- 4.6 Time expansion is also the only technique which preserves all characteristics of the original signal, which makes time expanded signals ideal for sound analysis. In addition to the simple echo-location calls which can be used for commuting, enabling the bat to find its way about, bats will also produce

feeding 'buzzes' when foraging. These buzzes occur when the bat closes in on its prey and are a consequence of the Doppler Effect, which results in a feeding 'buzz' as the reflected signal shortens when the animal approaches its prey. Such buzzes are used to assess the importance of an area for foraging. The recorded echo-location calls are then interpreted using BatSound sound analysis software. By use of the software it is possible to separate the different species by analysis of the sonograms produced.

- 4.7 Nesting birds were also assessed at this stage. Surveyors noted any signs of bird activity including nest-building, feeding at nest sites and any indirect evidence such as bird droppings and feathers.

5 Site Description

- 5.1 Originally built in 1908, the Pontardawe Arts Centre is situated within the town, some 6.6 km north-west of Neath. The Arts Centre stands on the High Street, with the front elevation facing west onto Herbert Street, and comprises the main three-storey building from which stem a number of interconnected sections of varying heights and sizes. The sections subject to assessment are positioned around the courtyard to the south and include the studio theatre, a storeroom, the south side of the main building, and the detached plant room, at the south-east end of the courtyard.
- 5.2 The main building is brick built with partially rendered sections, and features a ground floor café and upper gallery space, with skylights. External, metal fire escape stairs spirals up the southern end of the building, providing access to each storey via uPVC doors. The roof is covered with slate-type tiles and clay ridges. Attached to the external southern wall of the main building, at the first storey level, is a small concrete-block built storeroom which juts out into the courtyard. External access is provided by a timber door and an adjacent metal slatted door, which is covered with a metal mesh on the interior side. The roof is lined with a paper-type liner, with additional sections of bitumen felt, and is covered with slate-type tiles, and lead flashing along the ridges. A shallow loft void is present.
- 5.3 Adjacent to the storeroom is the studio theatre. This is coated with a rough render and features a pitched roof that is covered with slate-type tiles and clay ridge tiles. No loft void is present, the interior studio is open to the apex, creating a large, open space. A bay window protrudes out from the south-east elevation.
- 5.4 Just south of the main building is the plant room. This is a small, detached rectangular building located at the south-east end of the courtyard. The building is built with a mix of concrete block and brick, which has been covered with a rough render and painted cream. The pitched roof is constructed with a timber frame that is lined with a modern paper-type lining membrane and covered with Chinese slate, and a clay tile ridge. The roof structure is open to the apex, with no loft void. Doorways are covered with metal mesh and slats. Rainwater goods are metal and timber soffits are present.
- 5.5 The surrounding landscape is typically urban, with residential houses and commercial activity dominating. The Upper Clydach River is present just 70m to the south-west of the site, which flows into the Afon Tawe, some 350m to the south. These river sections are lined with trees which are connected to more extensive areas of woodland slightly further afield. The Swansea Canal is also just 90m to the north, and this will provide additional riparian habitat.

6 Desktop Study

- 6.1 Sites of nature conservation interest within 2km of Pontardawe Arts Centre were identified using the web-based MAGIC database (www.MAGIC.gov.uk). These included sites with statutory designations of international importance (Special Areas of Conservation SACs, Special Protected Areas SPAs and Ramsar sites) and sites of national importance (Sites of Special Scientific Interest SSSIs and National Nature Reserves NNRs).
- 6.2 Although no part of the site is within or directly adjacent any sites of nature conservation interest, the desktop study confirmed two sites within 2km of the Pontardawe Arts Centre:
- Frondeg SSSI, is of special interest for its neutral grasslands, fen, meadows and wet grassland and is approximately 1.8km north-west of the site; and
 - Fforest Goch Bog SSSI, is of special interest as a rain-fed raised bog and is approximately 1.9km south-east of the site.

- 6.3 All the aforementioned protected sites are considered to be outside the scheme's zone of influence and not reasonably likely to be affected, since they are designated for their terrestrial habitats. They are therefore not considered further in this assessment.

7 Survey Constraints

- 7.1 Full access to the loft void and around the site was available. During the dusk observations, due to the layout of the building and the presence of a storage container in the yard beside the plant room it was not possible to position the observers with clear unobstructed views of all the elevations being surveyed. Whilst some parts of the structures were partially obstructed it is not considered that this affected the overall efficacy of the observations.

8 Survey Results

- 8.1 Table 2 below summarises the time and weather conditions under which the surveys were undertaken. Wind speeds employ the Beaufort scale.

Table 2: Summary of Survey Activity and Weather Conditions

Date	Survey Type	Timing	Weather Conditions
10/11/2020	Internal and external daytime inspection (AR, PW)	10.15 – 12.00 hours Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)	Air temperature: 12°C Cloud cover: 7/8 oktas Wind speed: F1, light air Conditions: Rain showers
27/08/2021	Dusk emergence/activity observation (DM, MW, NI, BG, NA)	19.45 – 21.16 hours British Summer Time (BST) (Sunset 20.16 hours)	Air temperature: 16.5°C Cloud cover: 1/8 oktas Wind speed: F0, light air Conditions: Dry
14/09/2021	Dusk emergence/activity observation (RM, MW)	19.05 – 20.30 hours BST (Sunset 19.33 hours)	Air temperature: 16°C Cloud cover: 3/8 oktas Wind speed: F1, light air Conditions: Dry
Surveyors	Andrew Ross, Phoebe Williams, Diane Morgan, Miriam Wearing, Ben Gibson, Nigel Isaksson, Nic Aldridge, Rob Morgan		

- 8.2 During the daytime inspection in November 2020, the plant room, studio theatre, storeroom and south side of the main building were assessed for their suitability for roosting bats and nesting birds. The only loft void is present within the storeroom, none of the other structures having such a feature. The storeroom loft is approximately 1m high (from floor to central hip), and although considered suitable for roosting bats – being dark, dry and reasonably well-protected from the elements – no evidence of bats was recorded inside the void or within the internal space of this section.
- 8.3 Despite most parts of the storeroom being generally well maintained, several Potential Roosting Features (PRFs) were recorded on the building exterior offering roosting opportunities for bats. These include:
- gaps beneath lifted lead flashing around the ridges; and
 - gaps under lifted slate tiles.
- 8.4 No evidence of bats was recorded associated with the studio theatre or southern end of the main building. However, several PRFs were noted on the exterior of these sections, offering roosting opportunities for bats. These include:
- gaps at the ridge of the south elevation of the main building;
 - gaps at the eaves on south side of the main building; and
 - gaps under lifted roof tiles on both buildings.
- 8.5 Despite no bats or evidence of bats being recorded during the daytime assessment of the studio theatre, storeroom or south side of the main building, several external PRFs were noted. Therefore, due to the low density of external PRFs, these sections have a 'low' level of suitability for day-roosting bats in accordance with BCT's Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines (Collins 2016).
- 8.6 The plant room was also assessed. The exterior walls are in good condition and the eaves are well sealed. However, despite most parts of the plant room being generally well maintained, several PRFs were recorded on the exterior of the building offering roosting opportunities for bats. These include:
- gaps beneath lifted roof tiles of the west slope;
 - gaps at the edge tiles at both gable ends;
 - a gap created by broken mortar above guttering on north-east side;

- gap within the soffit box on the southern corner; and
 - a gap beneath the soffit box at the apex of the north-east elevation.
- 8.7 In addition to these notable external features of the plant room, a single bat dropping was found beneath the gap at the apex of the north-east gable end wall. Further internal inspection revealed approximately 10 droppings on the internal north-east gable end wall and an additional 8 droppings on the opposite south-west gable end wall. Droppings were associated with gaps between the rafters and concrete blocks. Most droppings were small and characteristic of *Pipistrellus sp.* The plant room was assessed to offer a 'medium' level of suitability for day-roosting bats in accordance with BCT's Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016).
- 8.8 An initial dusk observation was conducted by a team of observers on the evening of 27th August 2021. During this observation the south side of the main building and the plant room were viewed by a team of five observers from the courtyard, as well as the pavement, to watch all affected areas of the property. During the observation there were two emergences of common pipistrelle bats from near the apex of the east facing gable end of the main roof, though specific emergence points could not be seen due to restricted views of the studio theatre. There was also some feeding activity to the south-east of the property and a small amount of commuting over the main building.
- 8.9 The second dusk observation was conducted on the evening of 14th September 2021. During this observation there was one emergence from the east facing gable of the main roof of a common pipistrelle, which then entered and subsequently emerged from under the ridge tile at the apex of the gable end of the studio theatre. There was again foraging activity so the south-east of the property and small amounts of commuting over the main building and plant room consistent with the first observation.
- 8.10 Full details of the dusk observations are shown in Appendix II. A summary is below in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Survey Results

Date	Result
27/08/2021	• Two common pipistrelle bats emerged from the apex area of the east facing gable of the main building • A small amount of commuting over the building • Some foraging to the south-east of the plant room over adjacent properties.
14/09/2021	• One common pipistrelle entry and then emergence from under ridge tile studio theatre gable end • One common pipistrelle bat emerged from the apex area of the east facing gable of the main building, which then entered studio theatre roof as above • Small amount of commuting over buildings • Foraging south-east of plant room over adjacent properties

- 8.11 No evidence of nesting birds was found and the majority of small gaps and crevices noted for their suitability for bats are unlikely to be large enough for bird species such as blue tits (*Cyanistes caeruleus*).

9 Discussion and Conclusions

- 9.1 Survey effort identified two bat roosts within the property, both used by a small number of common pipistrelle bats. The roosts are within the apex area of the east facing gable of the main roof and also under the ridge tile of the studio theatre south gable wall. The roosts are assessed to be used as summer day roosts and are unlikely to be maternity roosts due to the small number of bats within each. However, as the observations were carried out in August and September, the possibility that earlier in the year there was a small maternity roost at this site cannot be ruled out. Maternity roosts will start to disperse in late August, though there is no evidence for the presence of one at the Arts Centre, and the likelihood of this occurring is assessed to be low.
- 9.2 Presence of bats at other times of year apart from the summer was considered and the building is assessed to have negligible potential to be used by hibernating bats. No features offering cool and constant thermal conditions to support hibernating bats were identified.
- 9.3 When considering the nature conservation significance of the site recognised criteria (Bat Mitigation Guidelines 2004 and Good Practice Guide: NRW Approach to Bats and Planning October 2015), the nature conservation status of the site is assessed to be low due to the presence of at most three individuals of a common species (common pipistrelle), and a breeding colony is assessed to be unlikely.
- 9.4 When the impacts of the proposed modifications for a cinema and lobby on the south elevation of the property are examined, the current plans that have been examined are unlikely to obstruct or

damage the two roosts identified. However, if there is a need for the erecting of scaffolding in front of either of the gable ends which contain the roosts, then a works timetable to avoid obstructing the entrance to the roost will be required, or an Ecological Method Statement (EMS), to ensure that the roost location is not obstructed. If the previously considered covered walkway between the studio theatre and the main theatre is brought back into the plans, then the location, height and size of the structure will need to be considered, as this installation could obstruct access to the roost in the gable end of the studio theatre. If the covered walkway is built then a European Protected Species (EPS) licence may be required before any work can start on the structure.

- 9.5 Within the current plans for the proposed changes to the property, an EPS licence will not be required at this time in order for the proposed works to be undertaken and completed.
- 9.6 When considering the context of the site within the landscape, the area may provide roosting opportunities within the town and some foraging potential. Both of the protected sites identified in the desktop study are beyond the zone of influence for this small construction project.
- 9.7 No evidence for nesting birds was recorded during the assessment. However, gaps within the exterior south and east corners of the plant room were noted as being suitable for nesting birds. The site also offers potential for nesting gulls on the roof space of the main building. All nesting birds are protected under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Therefore, birds must not be disturbed or their nests destroyed when they are active during the breeding season between March and August inclusive.

10 Recommendations

- 10.1 All bat species are legally protected from the impacts of disturbance, as well as loss and damage to roost locations; and loss of access or obstructed bat access. As indicated in the previous section, Pontardawe Arts Centre supports a minimum of two roosts, both used by a low number of common pipistrelle bats. As noted above, the proposed works are unlikely to directly affect the two identified roosts at the property, however, the construction work could require the use of scaffolding in front of either of the roosts obstructing access for summer roosting.
- 10.2 Whilst an EPS licence is not considered to be necessary within the current scope of the known plans for the property, a timetable for the work will be needed if the roosts will be obstructed by scaffolding. This timetable must not be within the spring/summer period to avoid obstructing the roosts. The period to avoid will be from May to mid-September with the objective of a finish date before the end of April the following year. If scaffolding will not be needed around the studio theatre gable end or the east facing gable of the main roof, then avoiding the summer roosting period will not be necessary as disturbing or obstructing the roost will be unlikely. If work requiring the installation of scaffolding cannot avoid the summer months, then it will be necessary to prepare an EMS to ensure that the erection of the scaffolding does not obstruct the bat roost location.
- 10.3 If any part of the main roof gable identified to contain the bat roost location needs modifying in any way or the ridge tile of the studio theatre gable needs replacing or modifying, then an EPS licence application for the removal or modification works must be made to NRW. A scheme of mitigation will be required to comply with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) in order for an EPS licence to be issued. Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) 2019, an EPS licence can only be issued if NRW are satisfied that:
 - there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature;
 - there is no satisfactory alternative, and;
 - the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.
- 10.4 An application for an EPS licence can only be made once planning consent is granted, and can take several weeks to put together. Considerable supporting documentation is needed including the licence application forms; a detailed EMS (providing information on the survey effort with recent survey data not older than 18 – 24 months), and details of the local status of the species concerned; the duties of an independent experienced Ecological Clerk of Works (ECW); as well as the duties and responsibilities of the various contractors (e.g. builders, carpenters, electricians, plumbers etc), and the owner/developer of the site. A local planning authority consultation document must also be completed/signed, and any pre-commencement conditions concerning ecology must be formally approved and signed off by the planning authority. NRW do not currently make a charge for issuing an EPS licence but this circumstance may change in the future.

- 10.5 All timing restrictions specified in this report must be clearly communicated to all involved parties for the property so that all parties understand where the danger of obstruction for the bat roost may occur, so that erecting of scaffolding does not take place within the spring/summer period mistakenly.
- 10.6 In the unlikely event that any bats or their signs are recorded during the work, all work must stop immediately in order to avoid committing an offence. Advice must then be sought from Just Mammals or alternatively NRW. It is possible that a bat will be in a torpid state and unable to fly off for several minutes or even up to 20 minutes. All bat species are legally protected from the impacts of disturbance, as well as loss and damage to roost locations; and loss of access or obstructed bat access under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) 2019.
- 10.7 Breeding birds are protected under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and active bird nests cannot legally be disturbed or destroyed. Once a nest is established, the birds must be able to have access at all times until the young have fledged and the nest is no longer active. The bird breeding season commences as early as March and continues into August for species which rear a second or third brood. If an active nest is found, it must be retained and protected. A cordon must be established for a safe working zone a suitable distance from the nest, and not until the chicks have fledged can the nest be destroyed. It is best to plan for building works where birds might be encountered to avoid the bird nesting season.
- 10.8 No issues of habitat fragmentation are identified within the development proposals at this site.
- 10.9 To comply with Planning Policy PPW10, it will be necessary to provide a scheme of enhancements to support biodiversity. This property has a limited scope for enhancements as there is no green space within the property currently. Current plans for the new cinema include a green space on the roof that must be used to provide at least one plant container supporting plants favourable for invertebrate species. The installation of bat or bird boxes is considered inappropriate.

11 References

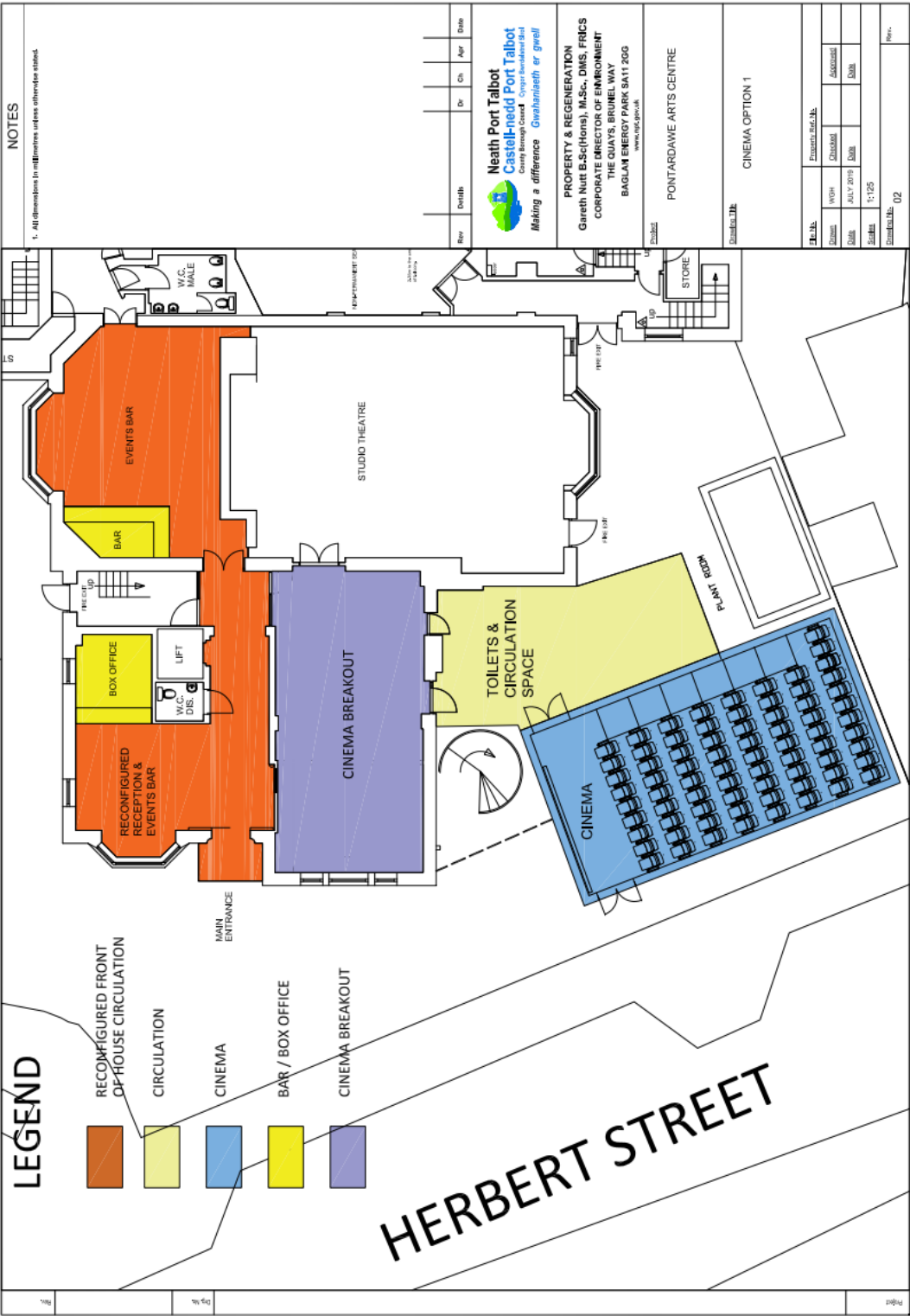
- Anon. (2017). '*Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – 2nd Edition*'. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester
- Anon. (1993). '*Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – A Technique for Environmental Audit*'. Joint Nature Conservation Committee JNCC, Peterborough
- Collins, J. (Ed.) (2016). '*Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines – 3rd Edition*'. Bat Conservation Trust, London
- Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004). '*Bat Mitigation Guidelines*'. English Nature, Peterborough
- Mitchell-Jones A.J. and McLeish A.P. (2004). '*The Bat Workers Manual – 3rd Edition*', English Nature, Peterborough
- Ninnes, R. (2015). '*NRW Approach to Bats and Planning*', Natural Resources Wales, Bangor
- Russ, J. (2012). '*British Bat Calls: A Guide to Species Identification*'. Pelagic Publishing, Exeter

Appendix I: Site Plans

Figure 1: Site location plan

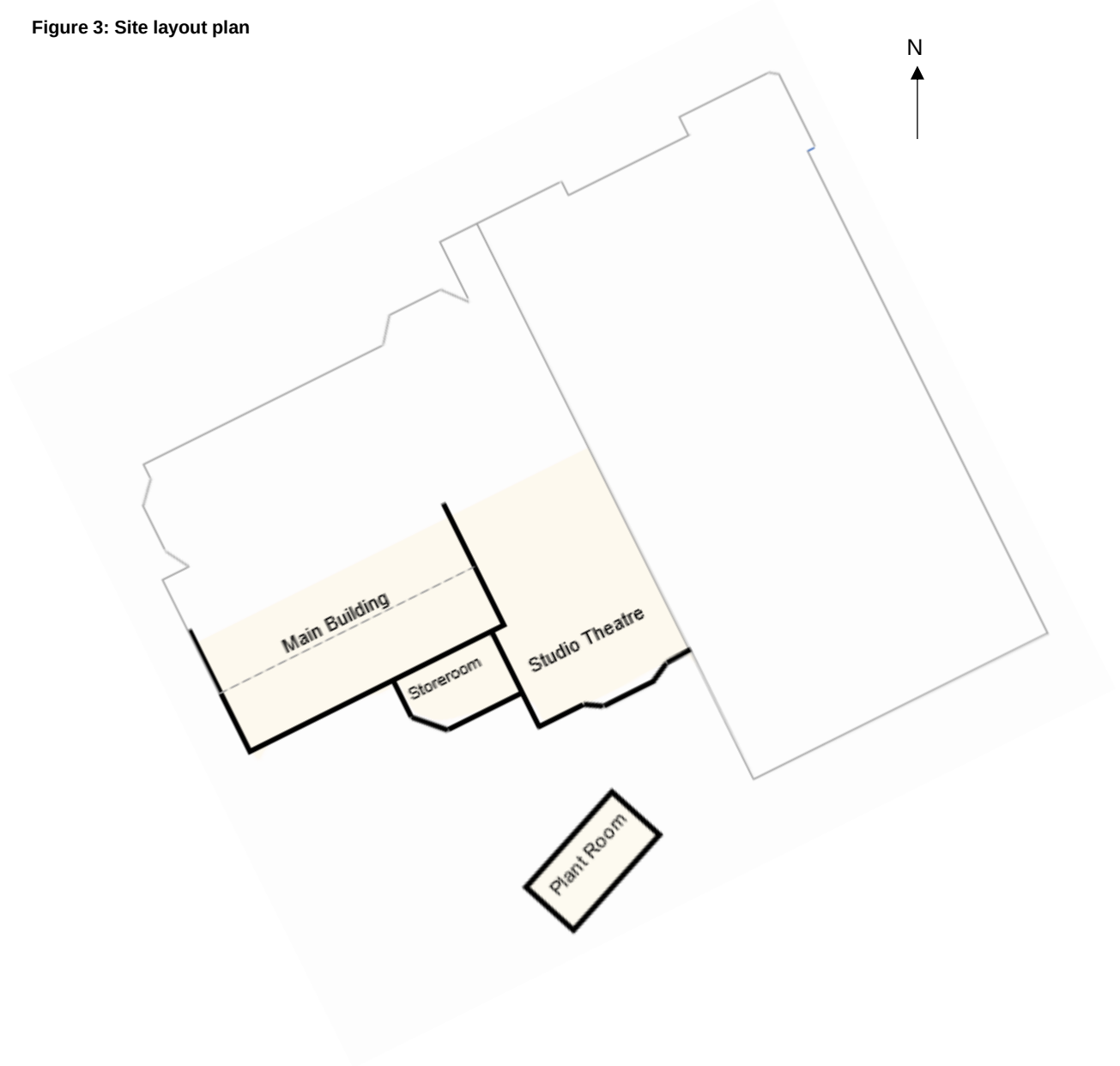


Figure 2: Plan of proposals: Cinema Option 1



THIS IS A C.A.S. PRODUCED DRAWING AND SHOULD NOT BE AMENDED BY HAND.

Figure 3: Site layout plan



Appendix II: Survey Results

Table 4: Pontardawe Arts Centre, Pontardawe – Dusk Observation 27th August 2021

Time (24 Hour Clock)	Species (Common Name)	Recording No.	Observed Activity
20:30 hours	Common pipistrelle (x2)	1 MW: 1 NI: 1 DM: 1 NA	Emerged in quick succession from main roof at apex area of east facing gable; flew south
20:37 hours	Common pipistrelle	3 DM	Foraging over ground to south-east of site
20:38 hours	Common pipistrelle (x2)	4 DM	Foraging to south-east of site
20:38 hours	Soprano pipistrelle	2 NA: 1 BG	Commuting over plant room from east to west
20:39 hours	Soprano pipistrelle	2 MW	Commuting north to south over rear of main building
20:43 hours	Common pipistrelle	5 DM	Foraging over adjacent property to south-east

Note: Records in bold indicate emergence or re-entry activity

Table 5: Pontardawe Arts Centre, Pontardawe – Dusk Observation 14th September 2021

Time (24 Hour Clock)	Species (Common Name)	Recording No.	Observed Activity
19.24 hours	Common pipistrelle	1 RM	Emerged from area of east facing gable of main roof
19.31 hours	Common pipistrelle	2 RM, 1 MW	Entered under gable end ridge tile of studio theatre
19.49 hours	Common pipistrelle	2 MW	Emerged from studio theatre gable end ridge tile
19.56 hours	Common pipistrelle	3 MW	Heard but not seen to south-east of site
20.09 hours	Common pipistrelle	3 RM, 4 MW	Commuting south to north between plant room and main building
20.13 hours	Common pipistrelle	4 RM	Heard but not seen foraging south-east of survey site
20.21 hours	Common pipistrelle	5 RM	Heard but not seen foraging south-east of survey site
20.22 hours	Soprano pipistrelle	5 MW	Heard but not seen foraging south-east of survey site

Note: Records in bold indicate emergence or re-entry activity

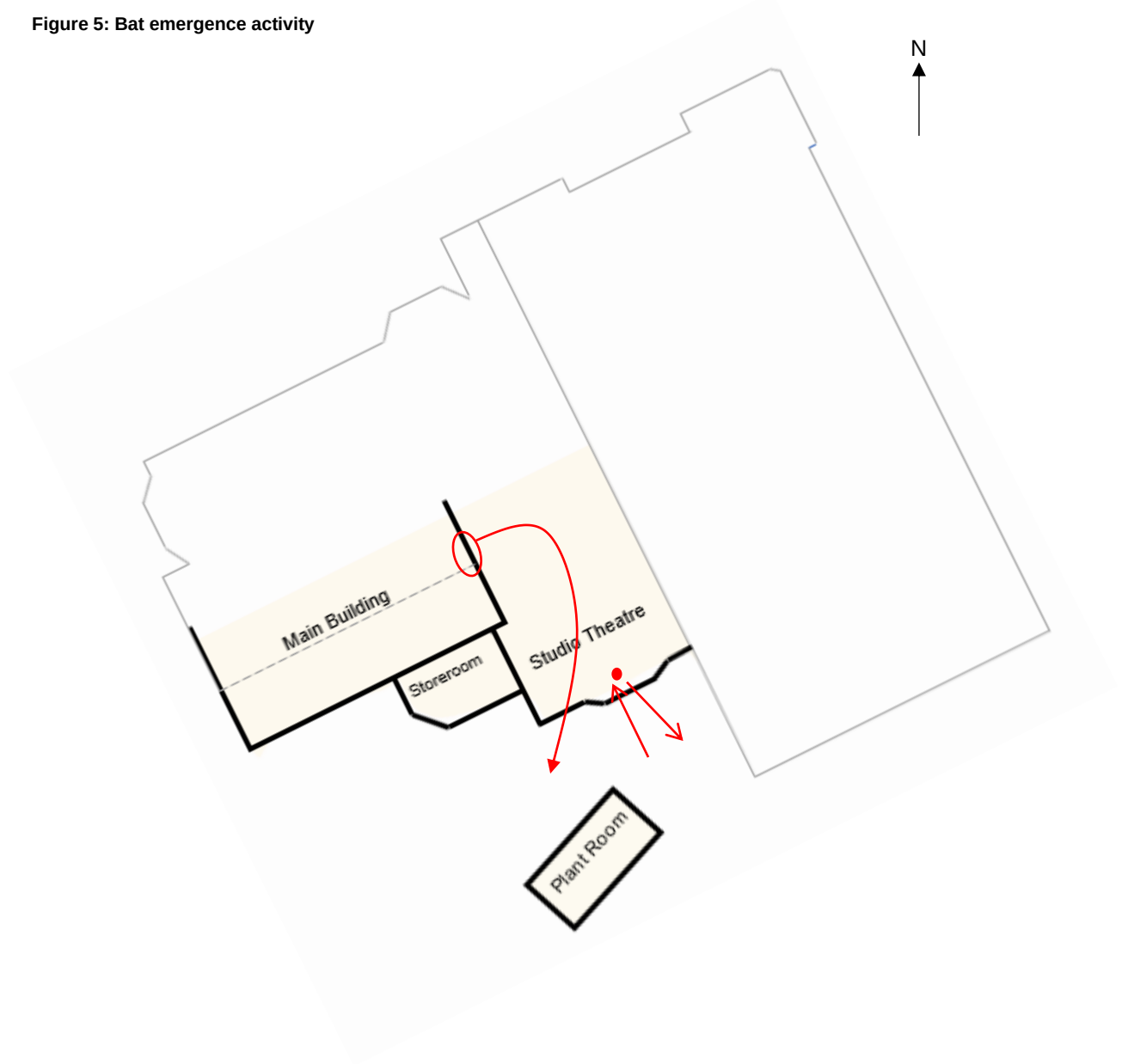
Appendix III: Evidence of Bat Roosts

Roost location:	Pontardawe Arts Centre, Herbert Street, Pontardawe SA8 4ED	
Survey date(s):	Day survey:	10 th November 2020: Andrew Ross, Phoebe Williams
	Dusk observations:	27 th August 2021: Diane Morgan, Miriam Wearing, Nigel Isaksson, Nic Aldridge, Ben Gibson 14 th September 2021: Miriam Wearing, Robert Morgan (Just Mammals Limited)
Description:	Brick building, with a three level main structure from which a number of interconnected sections attach to the south elevation. These include the storeroom and studio theatre, as well as a spiral metal fire escape south-west end of the elevation. The main building has a pitched roof, along the south-west to north-east line. The storeroom is a single storey concrete block room, with an exterior door. Adjacent to the storeroom is the studio theatre, a pitched roof with slate type tiles. The plant room, a separate small structure within the courtyard the studio theatre and storeroom lead to is a small concrete block structure. Rough render on the walls, painted, timber frame pitched roof with modern paper-type lining membrane.	
Actual and potential bat access points:	Gap under gable end ridge tile of studio theatre Gaps at eaves on south side of main building Gaps beneath lead flashing around ridges and joins Gaps under lifted roof tiles on all assessed roofs Gap above guttering north-east side plant room caused by broken mortar Soffit box gap, plant room, south corner Gap beneath soffit box at apex of north-east elevation, plant room	
Actual and potential bat roosting sites:	Gap under gable end ridge tile of studio theatre Gaps at eaves of north-east gable of main roof	
Species and number recorded:	<u>27th August 2021</u> Common pipistrelle (2): emerged from main building east gable apex area	
	<u>30th June 2021</u> Common pipistrelle (1): emerged from main building east gable apex area, entered gap under ridge tile of studio theatre, and then emerged.	
Droppings recorded:	1 dropping found beneath apex of north-east gable end wall of plant room 10 droppings found internally at north-east gable of plant room 8 droppings found south-west gable of plant room internally	

Figure 4: Observer locations at Pontardawe Arts Centre



Figure 5: Bat emergence activity



Appendix IV: Site Photographs

Plate 1: Front west elevation of plant room



Plate 2: south-west end of plant room, gaps at edge tiles and within soffit



Plate 3: Gaps along edge tiles on south-west end of plant room



Plate 4: North-east elevation of plant room, location of bat dropping at apex and gap at edge tile



Plate 5: Plant room interior, facing north-east



Plate 6: South elevation of storeroom and studio theatre



Plate 7: Lifted roof tiles and gap beneath lead flashing of storeroom



Plate 8: Interior of storeroom



Plate 9: West sloping roof of studio theatre, lifted slate tiles



Plate 10: Interior of Studio Theatre



Plate 11: South elevation of the main building



Plate 12: Front (west) elevation of main building



Appendix V: Ecology of British Bats

There are at least 18 species of bats breeding in Britain. Most of them are regarded as threatened due to a variety of factors including habitat loss, intolerance and disturbance/damage or loss of roosts. Of these species a number regularly use buildings at certain times of year in order to find safe secure roost sites. Often several different species can use a building over the course of the year, and not all species are present at the same time, making assessment of their presence complex.

Bats are highly mobile flying mammals, which in Britain, feed entirely on insects. They have evolved over seventy million years and have developed sophisticated mechanisms to allow them to effectively 'see' in the dark by using sound waves. This system is called echo-location which enables them to track and hunt down small moving insects whilst in flight, rather like radar does in a modern military fighter aircraft. It is possible to record this sound, and because each species of bat echo-locates in a different way, determine what the species is without actually handling the animal which made the call.

In winter, when their prey is scarce, British bats hibernate or enter torpor, in cool parts of caves, buildings (cavity walls), and tree cavities. They may wake occasionally and will feed if evening temperatures are greater than 7°C, when flying insects can be active. Generally however, activity during cold winters is very limited and bats only become fully active in spring, with late March and early April being a critical time for animals desperately trying to save energy whilst gaining weight. Disturbance during these months can therefore be more devastating to bats than at other times of year.

By late spring female bats will gather together in maternity roosts in order to give birth and rear their single baby in June. Such maternity roosts are often near to important foraging areas in order to save energy as flight requires vast energy resources. Flight routes to and from such roosts can therefore also be important and some bats are extremely light averse preferring dark locations without street or security lamps which can force them to take complex routes to reach foraging areas. Such lighting can also badly degrade foraging areas where they occur close to buildings and hedgerows and tree lines can be particularly important areas for bat foraging to take place particularly when close to the roost building.

Whilst females form maternity colonies, usually in warmer roofs or trees, male bats tend to seek out cooler sites which may not be so close to the foraging areas. Males are often solitary and do not exhibit the social behaviour that marks out females during the birthing period. Non-breeding females will also roost in this way, when they have no need to spend energy on raising a single baby.

Several British bat species are known to rely heavily on buildings to roost. Of these species, the most likely are the soprano pipistrelle bat and the common pipistrelle. Other bat species regularly found in buildings are the brown long-eared bat; Natterer's bat; Brandt's bats and whiskered bat. Pipistrelle species and the small myotis or mouse-eared species (Brandt's, whiskered etc) often favour locations at the ridge or around the exterior shell of the structure. Brown long-eared and Natterer's tend to prefer living within the roof area of a building – large lofts being popular.

Other species that are known to use the internal areas of built structures such as barns include the two horseshoe species, the greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*), and lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), as well as western barbastelle bat (*Barbastella barbastellus*).

Appendix VI: Relevant Legislation

Bats

All species of bat in Britain, and their places of rest are protected under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA), Section 9(1), 9(4)(a) and 9(4)(b) as amended by Schedule 12 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Further protection is afforded by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) 2019. In relation to structures used by bats for shelter or protection (i.e. roosts), this legislation makes it an offence to either intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any site used by bats, whether bats are present at the time or not, or to intentionally or recklessly disturb bats within a roost.

Infringements under this legislation include building demolition, removal of hollow trees, blocking, filling or installing grills over old mines or tunnels, building alteration or maintenance work, re-pointing of stone walls, getting rid of unwanted bat colonies, re-roofing, remedial timber treatment, re-wiring or plumbing in roofs, treatment of wasps, bees or cluster flies (Mitchell-Jones, 1992; Childs, 2001). Greater horseshoe bat, lesser horseshoe bat, Bechstein's bat, greater mouse eared bat and barbastelle are included in Annex II of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) 2019 and hence require special protection.

Maximum penalties for committing offences relating to bats or their roosts can amount to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to 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. Bodies corporate and their directors/secretaries are liable for offences under the 2019 Regulations and the WCA. Additionally, where such an offence results in the offender benefitting in a monetary form from the illegal action, confiscation or civil recovery of the proceeds can occur under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

It is sensible to assess as soon as possible if bats are present at potential sites for development – preferable before the land is acquired. In some cases the period required for adequate survey work may span more than one calendar year. If a development, including demolition or change of use, is likely to impact on bats and their roosts then a licence will usually be required. Adequate survey results are a necessary input to any licence application. If bats are not found until late in the development stage this may result in delays while a licence is sought and even in offences being committed.

The law with respect to dwellings and other structures is applied equally. Where disturbance is deemed likely to have a significant effect on bats to survive, breed and rear their young or will affect the local distribution and abundance of the species, a European Protected Species licence issued by Natural Resources Wales. A licence application must demonstrate that the development will not be detrimental to the maintenance and conservation status of the species concerned.

This explanation must be regarded only as a guide to the law. For further details, reference must be made to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) 2019 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Wild birds

All wild birds, their eggs and their nests are protected under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence, with certain exceptions, to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built;
- intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird;
- sell wild birds or put them on display for sale;
- use traps or similar items to kill, injure or take wild birds; and
- intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

Penalties that can be imposed for criminal offences in respect of a single bird, nest or egg contrary to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is an unlimited fine, up to six months imprisonment or both. In exceptional cases NRW and Natural England issues licences for specific purposes, so that legitimate work may be undertaken without breaking the law.

This document has been produced by Just Mammals Limited for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council solely. It may not be used by any person for any other purpose other than that specified without the express written permission of Just Mammals Limited. Any liability arising out of use by a third party of this document, for purposes not wholly connected with the above, shall be the responsibility of that party, who shall indemnify Just Mammals Limited against all claims, costs, damages, and losses, arising out of such use.

Unless specifically assigned or transferred within the terms of agreement, the consultant asserts and retains all Copyright, and other Intellectual Property Rights, in and over the document and its contents.

We confirm that in preparing this document we have exercised reasonable skill and care, taking into account the project objectives, the agreed scope of the work, prevailing site conditions, the degree of manpower and resources allocated to the project, and in compliance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct.

This document is valid for a period of two years from the front cover date.

Just Mammals Limited is an ecological consultancy based in Mid-Wales. Specialising in legally protected mammal, reptile and amphibian species, but providing a wide range of ecological services, it provides appropriate expertise on behalf of a range of clients.

Clients include government departments, local and regional authorities, development agencies, commercial and industrial enterprises as well as statutory nature conservation organisations, wildlife trusts and other charitable bodies.

Please visit our web site www.justmammals.co.uk to see the full range of services we offer and some of the projects we have undertaken in the past.



Natural Problem Solvers

Just Mammals Limited, Suite 131-136, Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way, Brecon
LD3 7HP Tel: 01874 623616