

BUCKMASTER BATCUP ARCHITECTS LTD

LAND SOUTH OF NEATH ABBEY ROAD, NEATH

ECOLOGY SUMMARY NOTE



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DOCUMENT REF: E22113001/DOC 01 – 01 November 2022

Issue	Revision	Stage	Date	Prepared by	Approved by	Signed
1	-	Draft for review	20 th October 2022	Ben Satherley (Ecologist)	Dr M Watts (Director)	
2	Inclusion of latest proposed layout plan	Final for submission	1 st November 2022	Ben Satherley (Ecologist)		

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Background

Soltys Brewster Ecology were commissioned by Buckmaster Batcup Architects Ltd (on behalf of the landowner, Mr Huw Jenkins) to undertake a combination of desk study and ecological site walkover at a parcel of land found south of Neath Abbey Road in Neath (central grid reference: SS 74371 97506, see Appendix I). A series of works have been proposed at the site including the erection of a new building and the refurbishment and remodelling of an existing industrial unit. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) have advised that a bat survey is not deemed necessary based on the condition and construction type of the buildings present however, a survey to establish the existing ecological conditions at the site and identify and potential ecological constraints/opportunities associated with the proposed works is required.

Desk Study

In order to provide some ecological context for the site, a desk-based consultation was undertaken in October 2022. The desk study primarily involved consultation with the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) to identify any existing ecological records of bats or roof nesting birds in the surrounding area (2km radius for bats, 1km for birds). Given the limited extent of the proposed works and conditions at the site (i.e. buildings are located within a heavily urbanised area with further industrial units found in all directions) a wider search for designated sites and other species was not considered of benefit. Summary plans to illustrate the SEWBRc records are included in Appendix II.

Consultation with SEWBRc confirmed that the site boundaries hold no statutory sites designated for the presence of bats (Sites of Special Scientific Interest or Special Areas of Conservation) and neither are there any such sites found within the 1km search radius.

While no records of bats were specifically associated with the site, consultation with SEWBRc revealed a total of 115no. bat records within the 2km search radius. The closest record (dated from 2002) belonged to an unknown species that was discovered in a house approximately 130m east of the site boundaries, although this house appears to have since been demolished. The locations of several further Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* roosts were identified throughout the wider area of Neath, with a single Brown Long-eared Bat *Plecotus auritus* maternity roost also found approximately 1850m from the site boundaries. In addition to the known roosts, the desk study also revealed foraging and commuting records for other bat species including

Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentonii*, Whiskered Bat *Myotis mystacinus*, Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*, Noctule *Nyctalus noctula* and other unidentified *Myotis sp* and *Pipistrellus sp*. The small number of bat records identified within a close proximity to the application site likely reflects the lack of suitable foraging habitat found at the site or in the immediately adjacent areas, with little to no green space or features connecting the site to more suitable habitats in the wider landscape.

Similarly to bats, no records of roof nesting birds are associated with the site or the immediately surrounding areas although SEWBReC records did return a total of 28no. nesting bird records within a 1km radius of the site. These records were typically associated with species that are known to nest on/within buildings such as House Martin *Delichon urbicum*, Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Swift *Apus apus*, Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*. The desk study also identified nesting records for other protected/priority species such as Barn Owl *Tyto alba* and Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* however, these were not considered of any relevance to the proposed works given the lack of suitable foraging/nesting habitat found at the application site – Barn Owls typically nest in holes of trees or undisturbed buildings situated near suitable foraging grounds while Peregrine show preference for very tall buildings with little or no disturbance.

Walkover Survey & External/Internal Building Inspection

The walkover survey was undertaken on 4th October 2022 by a suitably qualified ecologist¹. The survey revealed that the majority of land at the site was covered in existing hardstanding or bare ground (gravel, hardcore etc.) which was considered to hold little to no ecological value (see image on front page).

Existing vegetation at the site was limited to small patches of ephemeral/short perennial vegetation and species typically associated with colonised brownfield land such as Canadian Fleabane *Erigeron canadensis*, Common Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Hemp-agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*, Common Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*, Pale Toadflax *Linaria repens*, Autumn Hawkbit *Scorzoneroides autumnalis*, Hedge Mustard *Sisymbrium officinale*, Common Vervain *Verbena officinalis*, Hoary Mustard *Hirschfeldia incana*, Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Smooth Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris glabra*, Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, Common Mugwort *Artemisia vulgaris*, Common Sorrel *Rumex acetosa*, Bristly Oxtongue *Picris echioides*, Perforate St John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum*, Broadleaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Red Clover *Trifolium pratense*, Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, Ivy *Hedera helix*, Common Plantain *Plantago major*, Black Mustard *Brassica*

¹ Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) with experience in habitat and protected species surveys

nigra, Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*, Soapwort *Saponaria officinalis*, Biting Stonecrop *Sedum acre*, Wall Hawkweed *Hieracium murorum*, Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, Box Blueberry *Vaccinium ovatum* and Nipplewort *Lapsana communis*.

The site also included areas of scattered scrub which mostly consisted of low-lying Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* with Buddleia *Buddleja davidii* and young strands of Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Goat Willow *Salix caprea*, Grey Willow *Salix cinerea* and Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*. The species recorded at the site include at least nine different indicator species for post-industrial land as per the guidance for Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) selection within South Wales (Gwent Wildlife Trust, 2004). This falls short of the required 20no. or more indicator species (listed in Tables 1-6 in the guidance document) needed for consideration as a wildlife site.

The site contains two derelict industrial units, both of which were considered to be of Negligible potential to support roosting bats. The eastern of the two units (see Plate 1) is constructed of brick and concrete breeze block walls with metal support beams. There is no roof present in the northern extent of the building and as such this section is fully open to the elements and lacking in any potential roosting features. While the southern extent of the building does have a corrugated sheet metal roof, the building's western elevation is missing meaning the internal space is kept very light and draughty inside and is therefore unlikely to be suitable for day roosting. The various structural beams may be used as a feeding perch for local bats however, this was considered unlikely given the buildings location within a heavily urbanised area with no suitable foraging habitat found at the site or immediately adjacent areas. In comparison, the western of the two buildings (see Plate 3) has no remaining walls or roof and so is completely open and lacking in any features capable of supporting roosting bats (Negligible potential).

Plate 1 – Eastern Building (northern extent – left & southern extent – right)



Plate 2 – Western Building



During the walkover survey a small number of bird species were seen at/flying over the site including Magpie *Pica pica*, Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Blackbird *Turdus merula* and Common Gull *Larus canus* - none of which are considered particularly rare or endangered. Several old nests were also identified within one of the buildings at the site (see Plates 3 & 4) and nearby droppings and feathers indicate that these were likely to have been made by Feral Pigeons *Columba livia*. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended), all wild birds are protected against killing or injuring and their nests against damage or destruction whilst in use or being built.

Plate 3 – Nest on southern elevation of eastern building



Plate 4 – Nest between corrugated roof and wall of eastern building



No evidence to suggest use by any other protected or priority species was found at the site (e.g. foraging/commuting Badger or common reptile/amphibians), and the habitats present were considered unsuitable of supporting any such species.

No invasive species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) were identified during the site walkover.

Consideration of Development Impacts

The walkover survey did not identify any over-riding ecological constraints associated with the proposed development and the site was considered to be of low ecological value overall. While no further surveys would be required, several old/dis-used bird nests were identified in one of the buildings and so a precautionary approach to building works should be adopted, where any construction/demolition/refurbishment works are conducted outside of the bird breeding season which typically extends from March – August inclusive. Alternatively a visual inspection to confirm the absence of nesting birds should be undertaken prior to any such works commencing. If an active nest was identified, it would have to remain in place until such time as it was no longer in use. It is also recommended that during the construction phase of any future development any excavations are covered overnight, or a means of escape provided (e.g. rough sawn timber board of 300mm width placed at an angle less than 45 degrees) to minimise the risk to small mammals (e.g. Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* or Fox *Vulpes vulpes*) that may become trapped.

Based on the survey findings and the latest proposed building plans, opportunities for enhancement at the site are limited although the following provision of bat and bird boxes would be considered appropriate to provide enhanced nesting and roosting opportunities as part of the scheme (see annotated proposed masterplan in Appendix I).

- 2no. Double Chambered Vivara Pro Woodstone House Sparrow Nest Box (or similar design for use by House Sparrow) to be installed on northern elevation of proposed new building.
- 2no. Beaumaris WoodStone Bat Boxes (Midi) (or similar design for use by crevice dwelling species) to be installed on the eastern (external) elevations of the existing industrial units in the southern extent of the site.

The Sparrow nest boxes will be installed on the northern elevation of the proposed new building so that they are out of direct sunlight. They will also be positioned so that they are least two meters above ground level and are inaccessible to members of the public. Where possible these boxes will be recessed into the existing stonework (or surface mounted if integrating is not practical).

The bat boxes should be installed as high as possible on the walls of the existing industrial units (at least 3m from ground level), ideally so the top of each box is just below eaves level and so that they are not positioned directly above any doors or windows. Existing lighting columns are present outside of the site boundaries and so it is likely that the bat boxes will be subjected to some artificial light spill. The bat boxes

are therefore only likely to be used by species that are less sensitive to light such as Pipistrelles – The desk study revealed that Pipistrelles have previously roosted in close proximity to the site.

Other localised enhancements at the site could include the use of native species or species known to benefit to local wildlife and pollinators in any soft landscaping plan. Furthermore, the incorporation of ‘biodiverse roofs’ or walls² planted with native species or those with a known wildlife benefit should be considered for the newly proposed building as these would increase resources and further enhance the site for local bird and invertebrate populations.

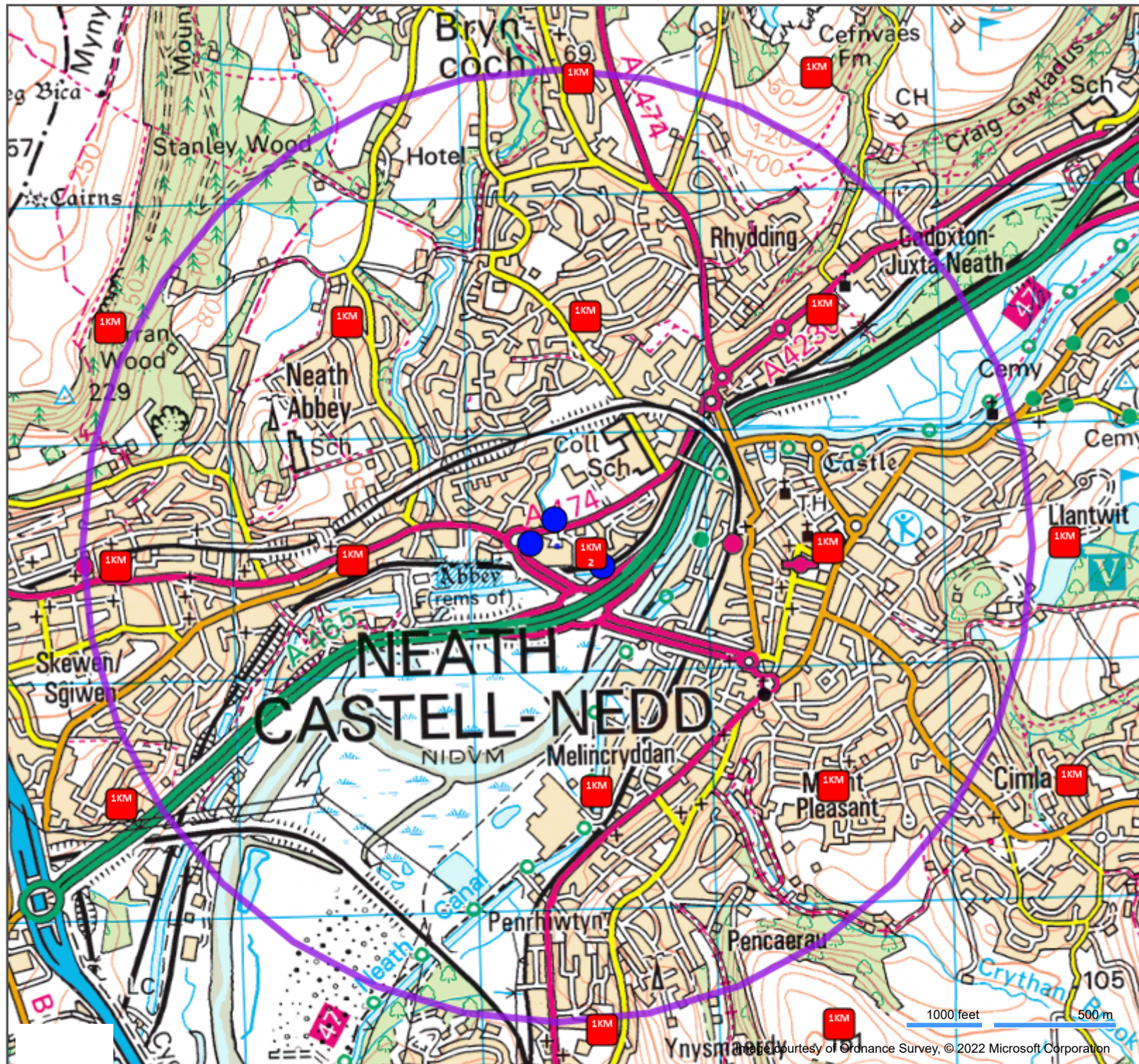
References

Gwent Wildlife Trust (2004). *Guidelines for the Selection of Wildlife Sites in South Wales*. The South Wales Wildlife Sites Partnership.

² For example, see: <https://green-roofs.co.uk/biodiversity-net-gain-bng-living-roofs-walls/>
Buckmaster Batcup Architects Ltd
Land south of Neath Abbey Road, Neath
[Ecology Summary Note, October 2022](#)
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APPENDIX I PROPOSED MASTERPLAN (ANNOTATED)

APPENDIX II DESK STUDY INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM SEWBR_eC



Key

- Search Location
- Search Buffer (2000m)

- Birds
- Mammals