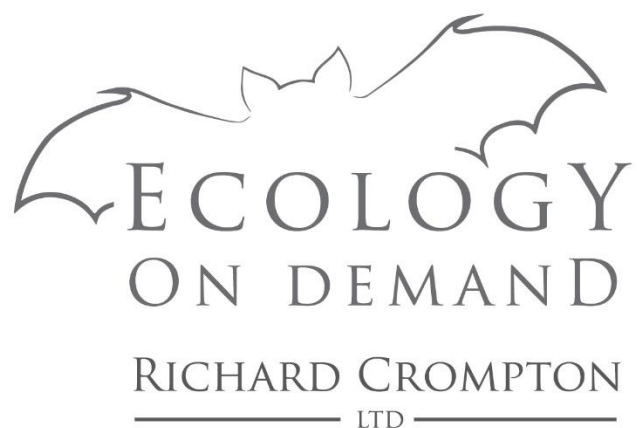




Location	Neath Leisure Centre, Neath.
Title	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment and Bat Activity Surveys and Assessment
Client	Principal Structural Engineer, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Surveyors	Kate Hunt & Jason Franklin
Report prepared by	Kate Hunt, BSC, MSC, MCIEEM and Richard Crompton, BSc, CEnv, MCIEEM, FLS
Report Date	October 2022
Version	v2_final, 31/10/2022

Neath Leisure Centre Bat Survey Report

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	3
2. Preliminary Roost Inspection (PRA) results	6
3. Activity survey results	10
4. Summary	13
5. References	14

FIGURES

Figure 1: East side looking North	4
Figure 2: East side looking South	4
Figure 3: South side of leisure centre from Dyfed Road (SE)	4
Figure 4: South side (western end)	4
Figure 5: North side (NE) inaccessible.....	4
Figure 6: West side (NW corner).....	4
Figure 7: Site Location.....	5
Figure 8: Surveyor and PRF Locations.....	9
Figure 9: Infra red camera deployed at W1 19th August 2022.....	11
Figure 10: View from camera.....	12

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Neath Leisure Centre is intended to be demolished due to its age and condition. It also has a problem with hazardous asbestos in the roof space. As part of the Local Authority's biodiversity duties a bat survey was requested to assess any risk to roosting bats during this work.

This report summarises two surveys that were undertaken by experienced and appropriately licensed surveyors in July and August 2022. Due to the asbestos risk, no internal inspection was possible, so two dusk emergence surveys were undertaken which included the use of infrared Night Vision Aids.

A single bat was observed flying close to the NE corner of the building. As the northern elevation of the building had limited access for the survey, there is a possibility this bat emerged from within the cladding. We do not consider further surveys proportionate – partly because there is no realistic way to check with any greater certainty - but we recommend that an ecologist is onsite to check and supervise the removal of the cladding on the north elevation as a precaution. A tree in that location should also be checked prior to removal.

No licence or further surveys are recommended unless the pre-demolition check identifies any evidence of bat roosting.

The client has offered to erect some bat boxes in the locality as an enhancement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Neath Leisure Centre is located on Dyfed Road in the centre of Neath on Dyfed Road, SA11 3AW. Grid reference SS757974. The site is located within an urban and residential area, with residential housing located opposite and to the south of the leisure centre on Dyfed Road and a doctor's surgery adjacent to the centre to the west. Neath Rugby Club lies to the north-west, Neath Cricket Club to the north-east and Neath Tennis Club to the south-east. Gnoll Country Park and areas of broadleaved woodland lie to the east. The north side of the leisure centre borders the Cricket Ground.

The building is due to be demolished due to its age and condition. A new leisure centre is due to be built nearby, and the site left vacant for the time being until an alternate use is found.

It was not possible to access the north side of the building directly during the PRA to identify any potential roosting features. The north side of the building was mostly covered with white cladding and netting for cricket purposes. A medium sized / semi-mature tree was located to the NE corner further obscuring the view of the north side. (Figure 5). This limited access to the north side was seen as a constraint to the survey. The tree was assessed from the entrance to the cricket ground and was not noted as having potential for roosting bats, although this could not be confirmed at this distance.

This report details the findings of daytime inspections and dusk bat emergence surveys carried out in July and August 2022.



Figure 1: East side looking North



Figure 2: East side looking South



Figure 3: South side of leisure centre from Dyfed Road (SE)



Figure 4: South side (western end)



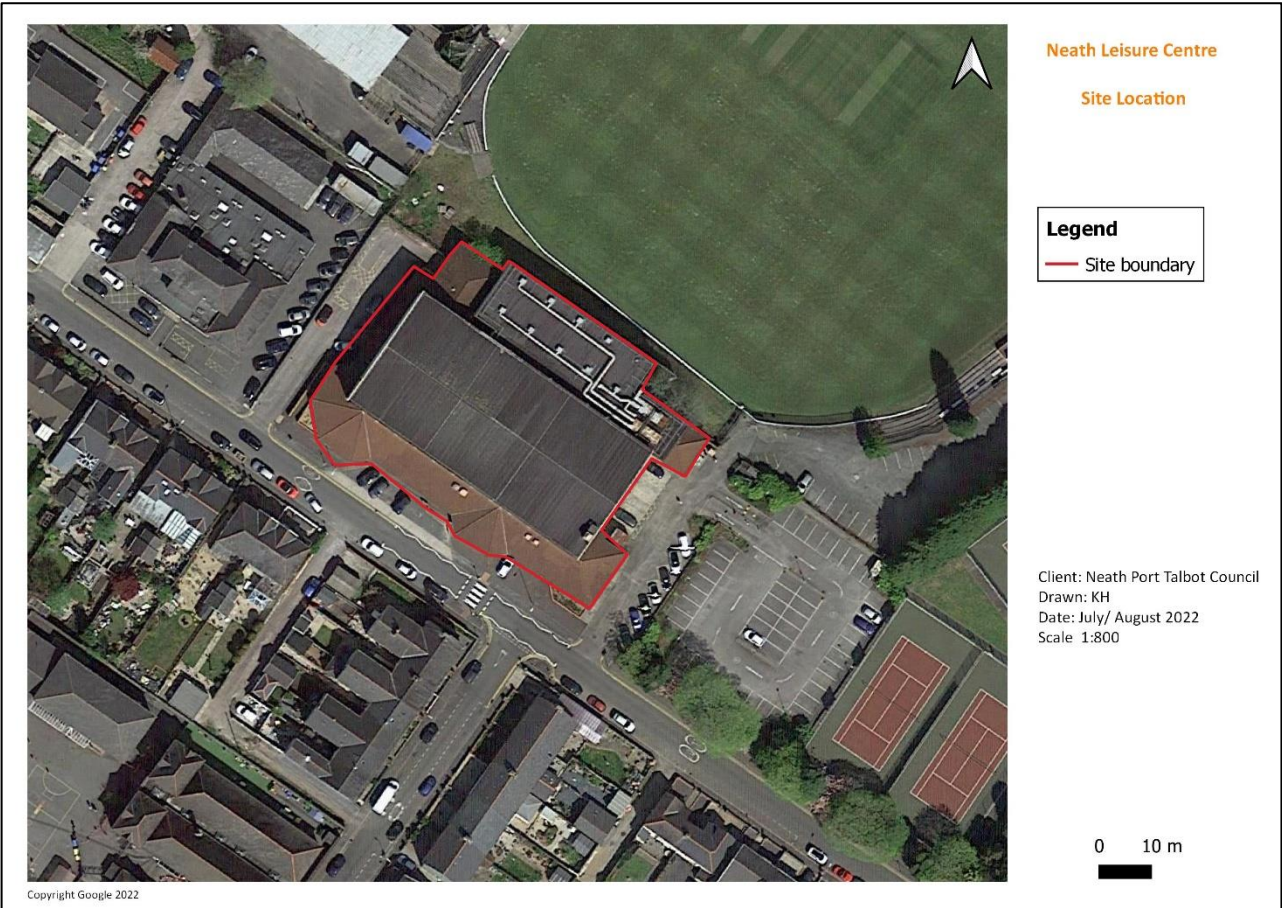
Figure 5: North side (NE) inaccessible



Figure 6: West side (NW corner)

A daytime Preliminary bat roost assessment (PRA) was undertaken on 29th July of the exterior of the leisure centre, with the aim of identifying any features externally with the potential to support roosting bats. This was followed by a dusk emergence survey. Figure 7 below illustrates the site location and site boundary.

Figure 7: Site Location



2. PRELIMINARY ROOST INSPECTION (PRA) RESULTS

An initial Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken on the 29th July 2022 by Kate Hunt, BSc, MSc, MCIEEM a NRW bat survey license holder and Jason Franklin (NRW accredited agent). The findings of the PRA are shown in Table 1 with Potential Roost Features (PRFs) identified and surveyor locations for the activity surveys illustrated in Figure 8.

Due to the public and open nature of the site with frequent vehicular access to the adjacent cricket ground to the east, and potential risk of the camera causing an obstruction or trip hazard to pedestrians to the southern side along the pavement/road, the Infra-Red video camera was only used at West 1(W1) on the dusk survey on 19th August.

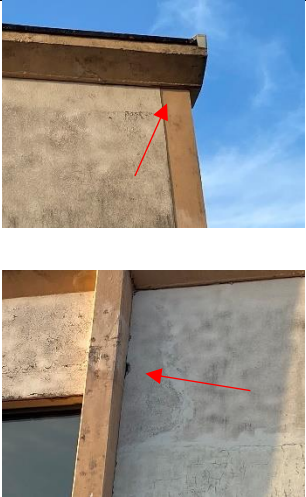
Due to the presence of hazardous asbestos it was not possible to inspect the internal roof space. This was not considered to be a significant limitation as this type of building does not usually have a suitable roost location at the ridge, and the soffits are enclosed internally and not visible anyway.

A data search was not undertaken as the NPTCBC Countryside and Wildlife Team confirmed by email that they have no records of roosts in the building, and nearby records would have little bearing on this structure. A building of this construction and purpose in an suburban location is only be suited to use by common or soprano pipistrelle bats, if any at all, so less abundant species can be ruled out relatively confidently.

Table 1 – Preliminary Roost Assessment results

FEATURE REFERENCE (by building elevation)	DESCRIPTION	IMAGE
EAST 1 (E1)	Small gap by soffit NE corner of main building, small crack to fascia.	

EAST 2 (E2)	2 small holes in brick wall, below flat roof and above the window to south elevation of brick extension/garage/ storage building to east of main building.	
EAST 3 (E3)	2 adjacent features - Missing small circular vent cover to soffit, east elevation of garage building. External vent to garage wall.	 
EAST 4 (E4)	Small opening at tip of sloping ridge tile.	
EAST 5 (E5)	Short section of narrow metal vent missing on underside, south elevation.	
WEST 1 (W1)	Rendered brick, small gap to NW base of soffit.	

SOUTH (S1)	SE uppermost corner of main concrete rendered building. Small slit to base of soffit, slit midway (peeling paint?) and small crack in wall below soffit.	
SOUTH 2 (S2)	Base of wooden soffit, close to air conditioning unit, part of the rusty metal vent missing leaving approx a 1-1.5" gap.	
SOUTH 3 (S3)	Small gap above window	
SOUTH 4 (S4)	Dropped wooden soffit approx. leaving approx 1-1.5" gap.	
SOUTH 5 (S6)	Missing vent and gap to soffit	
SOUTH 6 & 7 S6 & S7	Dropped soffit as S4	

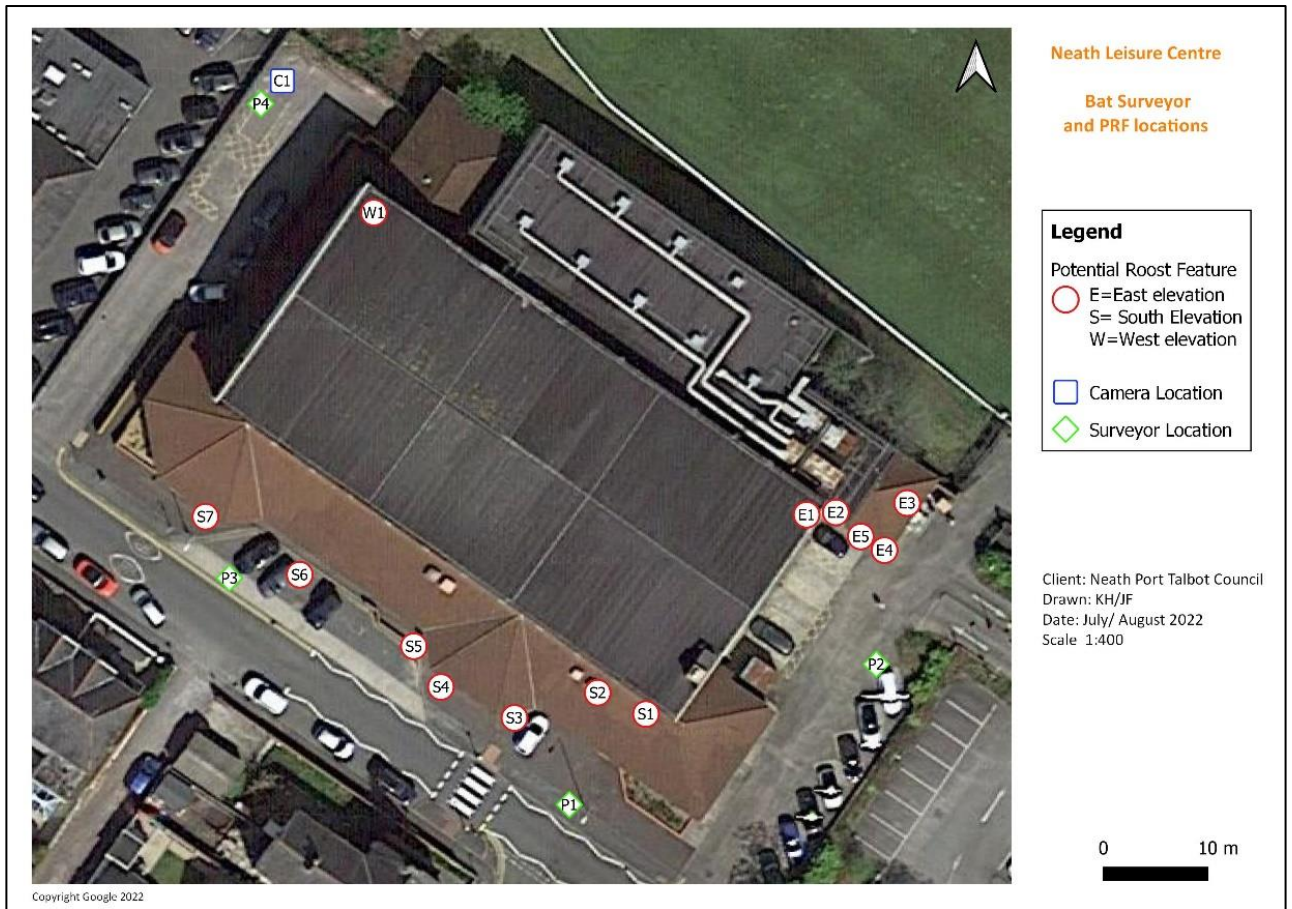


Figure 8: Surveyor and PRF Locations

3. ACTIVITY SURVEY RESULTS

Following the initial assessment bat activity surveys (dusk emergence) were undertaken on 29th July and 19th August 2022. An Infra red video camera (IR camera Sony handycam SR5) was used at W1 alongside the surveyor on 19th August.

Table 2 – Bat activity survey results.

Location	Survey	Results	Observations
E1- E5 Surveyor 1	29/07/22 - Dusk	No bats seen to emerge or enter any of the features identified. The bat activity noted was within the cricket ground to the NE. No bats were seen or heard to the east side.	A Soprano pipistrelle was seen to fly past the North side of the building by the tree at 2131hrs and then forage for approximately 5 minutes. A Common pipistrelle was recorded to the NE corner foraging over the cricket pitch at 2145. The North side was lit from an event at the Rugby club with loud music at the time of the survey.
	19/08/22 - Dusk		A Soprano pipistrelle was seen to fly past the North side of the building by the tree at 2050hrs and then forage for approximately 5 minutes. A Common pipistrelle was recorded to the NE corner foraging over the cricket pitch at 2117. The east side is lit from the adjacent car park street lighting. The North side was lit from the cricket ground (a pre-match event was in place at the time of the survey).

Location	Survey	Results	Observations
S1- S7 Surveyor 2	29/07/22 – Dusk	No bats were recorded during the survey or seen along the south side of road. No bats were seen to emerge or enter any of the features identified.	The southern side faces the road which is lit by street lighting. Pedestrian activity was noted throughout the survey. The building was lit internally throughout the survey with lightspill from lower and upper windows.
W1 Surveyor 2 Infra red video camera C1	19/08/22 - Dusk	No bats were seen to emerge or enter W1. No bats were recorded emerging or entering W1 on the Infra red video camera.	Common pipistrelle and Noctule (very faint) were recorded on the EM but no bats were seen in the vicinity of the building.



Figure 9: Infra red camera deployed at W1 19th August 2022



Figure 10: View from camera

4. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

No bats were seen to emerge from any of the features identified during the activity surveys. The building was illuminated externally from street lighting and the adjacent sports pitches/clubs and from internally during both surveys, further reducing suitability for bats

It was not possible to fully access the north side as part of the surveys. The north side is also clad and netted for cricket purposes.

Because of the limitations to the survey (limited access on the north side and lack of access to internal loft space due to asbestos), this low potential roosting structure (that would normally have a single emergence or re-entry survey), two emergence surveys were undertaken to add confidence.

A single bat was seen approximately 20 minutes after sunset on both surveys to the East (seen to NE corner foraging over the cricket pitch). It could not be determined if the bat emerged from the building from behind the tree or cladding; it was not seen to fly from the east from beyond the site (although this cannot be ruled out) and was first seen and heard foraging close to the building. The bat may have emerged from the north side of the main building, but this could not be concluded.

It is therefore possible that there is /are roosting features to the north side. Because a single bat of a small species (pipistrelle) would be extremely difficult to locate in such a large structure in a physical inspection, it is not considered that any further survey effort would be proportionate. It is recommended that a bat ecologist is present on site when the cladding is removed / and if the tree is felled, to check for any features that may be used by roosting bats. In the event a bat was discovered the works would need to pause while a European Protected Species licence was applied for. The client has indicated their willingness to erect some bat boxes nearby: supervision and placement/style of boxes to be advised by the council's own bat specialist ecologist.

No licence or further surveys are recommended unless the pre-demolition check identifies any evidence of bat roosting.

5. REFERENCES

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