

CAREDIG HOUSING ASSOCIATION

22 VICTORIA GARDENS, NEATH

BUILDING INSPECTION (PROTECTED SPECIES) SURVEY

JUNE 2024



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Soltys Brewster Ecology (SBE) were commissioned by Caredig Housing Association to undertake an ecological appraisal at the site comprising the semi-detached, former residential property at 22 Victoria Gardens, Neath. The building is vacant and has been proposed for conversion into a number of residential units (flats). The adjoining property (No. 20) is currently undergoing a similar conversion. In order to inform the planning application consideration of use of the building by protected species – e.g. nesting birds or roosting bats - is required as part of the submission along with biodiversity enhancement measures.
- 1.2. The semi-detached property is situated at 22 Victoria Gardens in amongst similar residential properties to the immediate north, east and south. Victoria Gardens/Gnoll Park Road defines the western edge of the site with Victoria Gardens public park on the western side of the road – the park comprises an area of planted trees, scrub and grassland managed as public open space. Plans showing the existing site location and proposed conversion works are included in Appendix I.
- 1.3. The property at No. 22 has limited connectivity to areas of green space. Although Victoria Gardens Park is within 20m of the property, the park itself is an island of urban green space approximately 1.5ha. in area with commercial, residential, school and church buildings to all sides. The Gnoll Country Park is located approximately 450m east of No. 22 but green connections to this larger habitat feature are limited – street trees extend into residential areas west of the Country park but none of the surrounding streets/gardens within 100m of No. 22 support contiguous tree or shrub vegetation based on a review of available aerial imagery.
- 1.4. The current report presents the findings of an ecological data search and daytime building inspection survey undertaken at the site in June 2024. This is a stepwise approach which follows industry best practice guidelines (e.g. CIEEM, 2017 & BCT, 2023). The current report describes the existing ecological conditions as well as identifying any potential ecological constraints/opportunities associated with the proposed conversion works at the site. The report also includes advice on any required mitigation/licensing associated with the proposed works and opportunities to incorporate enhancements as part of the scheme.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1. In order to establish the baseline ecological conditions on site, a combination of desk-based consultation, and daytime building inspection survey were undertaken in June 2024. The scope of survey work was based on best practice guidelines (BCT, 2023).

Desk study

- 2.2. The desk study primarily involved consultation with the South East Wales Biodiversity Record Centre (SEWBReC) to identify any existing ecological records of bats or roof nesting birds in the surrounding area (2km radius for bats, 150m for birds). The study also involved a search for any Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within a 10km radius of the site which have been designated for bats. Given the extent of the proposed development and conditions at the site (conversion of a vacant residential property), a more extensive search for all statutory and non-statutory designated sites and other protected species was not considered of benefit for the ecological appraisal. A summary plan of the data provided is included in Appendix II.

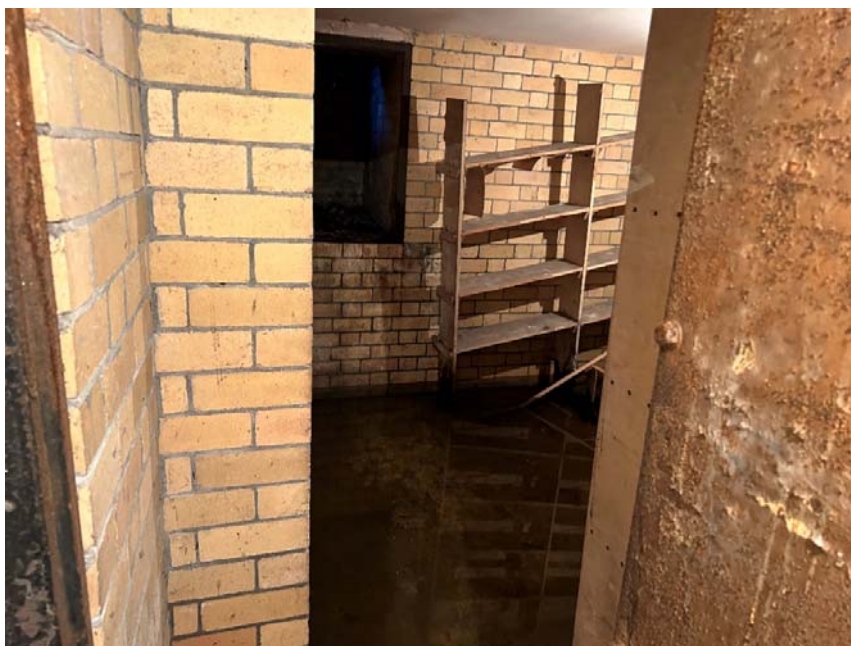
Building Inspection Survey

- 2.3. The site survey was undertaken on 17 June 2024 by a suitably experienced ecologist¹ and comprised of an external/internal check of the building to search for evidence of bats or nesting birds. The survey aimed to identify:
- if bats are, or have been, present within the building and, if so, which species are present;
 - the type of roost (e.g. maternity roost, day roost used by males or non-breeding females, feeding perch, night roost, mating roost, transitional roost, hibernaculum);
 - how bats use the buildings (e.g. location of roosting bats, exit and entrance points to the roost); and
 - the intensity of use (e.g. likely number of bats, time and duration of use).
- 2.4. The external survey at the site involved the use of binoculars to identify possible access/entry points into the building and aimed to identify any evidence of use by bats such as droppings, staining, prey remains etc. The external survey was undertaken from ground-level, with internal inspections of ground, first and second floor undertaken. A basement is present at the frontage of the site (western side) and could be partly accessed via a series of steep steps on the ground floor – however, the basement was flooded to a depth of 150 – 200mm and direct access was not possible (Plate 1). A roof void was also inspected via the

¹ Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management (MCIEEM) & NRW bat licence holder S091372/1
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 22 Victoria Gardens, Neath
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access hatch on the second floor although the western gable within the roof void could not be directly accessed due to space restrictions. Any evidence of use of the buildings or surrounding areas by other protected species, such as nesting birds, was also noted alongside a check for any invasive plant species.

Plate 1 Flooded basement as viewed from steps descending from ground floor



2.5 During external/internal inspections, the surveyor searched for roost evidence (dead specimens, droppings, staining, scratch marks, noise, etc.) as described above and an assessment of the buildings potential to support nesting birds was also undertaken. The scope of the bat inspection survey, including timing, survey effort etc., was based on guidelines published by the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT, 2023). The potential of the building to support roosting bats was determined based on the following categories (BCT 2023):

- **Known or confirmed roost**
- **High** - A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.
- **Moderate** – A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity and hibernation – the categorisation described in this list is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after the presence is confirmed).

- **Low** – A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site but could be used by individual hibernating bats).
- **Negligible²** – No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.
- **None** – No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).

Potential Flight-paths and Foraging Habitats

2.6 Combining the information gathered in the data search, aerial imagery (e.g. Google Earth™) and the site visit for the building inspection, the presence of habitat features within the landscape was also assessed using a similar categorisation system as that outlined above for structures and trees and based on guidelines published by the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, 2023):

- **High** – Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by bats for flight-paths such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.
- **Moderate** – Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for flight-paths such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
- **Low** – Habitat that could be used by small numbers of bats as flight-paths such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
- **Negligible** – No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight-paths or by foraging bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.

² Negligible is defined as 'so small or unimportant as to be not worth considering, insignificant'. This category may be used where there are places that a bat could roost or forage (due to one attribute) but it is unlikely that they actually would (due to another attribute).

- **None** – No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).

Constraints

- 2.7. As noted in 2.4, no direct access to the flooded basement was possible at the time of the survey and restrictions on space were such that the western gable within the roof void was not directly accessed/inspected. No other constraints were encountered during the survey and those identified were not considered significant for informing the day-time inspection and the interpretation of findings.

3.0 RESULTS

Desk Study

- 3.1 The site is not covered by any form of nature conservation designation, and neither is it located in close proximity to any such site so as to be of ecological relevance. Victoria Gardens Park and the Gnoll Estate are both designated as Historic Parklands although neither site was of particular ecological relevance to the proposed conversion works at 22 Victoria Gardens (see Section 1.3 & 3.11).
- 3.2 No records of bats or roof nesting birds were specifically associated with the site itself although the SEWBRc species data returned a total of 126no. bat records within the 2km search area as well as 25no. records of roof nesting birds – as summary plan of records is included in Appendix II. The bird records were primarily provide at 1km or 2km grid square resolution, with a total of 13 species recorded. Two records of Swift *Apus apus* were identified in close proximity including a nest record for No. 20 Victoria Gardens from 2017 – nesting was observed around the apex of the gable end. The other species recorded from the data search which were considered of relevance to the application site at No. 22 include House Martin *Delichon urbicum*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* and Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*. Records of other species, such as gulls and Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, were not considered of relevance based on habitat/nesting requirements.
- 3.3 The closest bat record was located approximately 90m west of the site, associated with one of the buildings on the southern side of Victoria Gardens parkland – a single adult Pipistrelle bats was confirmed as roosting. Five other records for Pipistrelle bats were identified in close proximity (within 500m) of the application site with a maternity roost present to the east associated with properties at the edge of the Gnoll Country Park. No other bat species were identified within the 500m radius of the site at 22 Victoria Gardens although a total of up to 8 species have been recorded within the 2km search area including Brown Long-

eared *Plecotus auritus*, Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Common & Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*/*P. pygmaeus*, Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus* and 3 species of *Myotis*. Some localised concentrations of bat records were associated with distinct habitat features in the surrounding area including the Gnoll Country Park to the east (ca. 420m), the corridor of the River Neath to the west (ca. 550m), Eaglebush Valley Woods to the south (ca. 1.3km) and from surveys undertaken in the Neath Abbey area (ca. 1.7km west). Other records were typically of individual bats noted in residential areas (see Appendix II).

Walkover and Building Inspection Survey

- 3.4 A summary of the site features and building inspection survey findings are provided in the following sections with further detail including target notes and supporting photographs included in Appendix III. The existing semi-detached property and No.22 and hardstanding/bare ground with some colonising and shrub vegetation were the only features at the site. The former residential property is located on a busy street at the edge of Neath town centre with residential properties and Victoria Gardens park in the immediate surrounding area (within 50m). Lighting columns are present along Victoria Gardens/Gnoll Park Road, immediately to the west of the property.
- 3.5 The former residential property is vacant and all furniture and interior fittings have been removed such that the building is effectively a shell, ahead of the proposed conversion works. The semi-detached, Victorian property is of stone construction over two storeys with a pitched slate roof. A more recent brick-built extension is attached to the eastern side of the building – the roof slates on the extension look to have been replaced relatively recently. Decorative timber fascia are present to gables on the northern and western elevations and there are numerous gaps associated with the irregular surface of the stonework around either side of these gables. Bird nesting material and old splashing (droppings) was noted particularly around the northern gable (see notes, Appendix III) with cracked stonework on the western elevation also providing a potential means of access to birds or bats, although no external evidence was noted here.
- 3.6 The interior of the property comprises of empty rooms to ground, first and second floor (i.e. attic space) with the latter already comprising part of the former living space. A basement is present at the western elevation which is accessed via steep steps in the ground floor hall – as noted in Section 2.4, the basement was flooded at the time of the current survey and no direct access was possible. No evidence of use by bats or nesting birds was identified within the ground, first or second floor rooms at the property and, with the exception of a broken window pane on the northern elevation and gaps around the window boarding at the eastern elevation, no obvious means of access into the property was noted – all other doors and windows are sound (see notes, Appendix III). The basement could not be directly accessed but there is no obvious external entry point to this area – the western part of the site comprises bare ground and shrub

- planting. identified and the doors and windows of the building are all sound – there is no obvious means of access to the interior of the building.
- 3.7 The roof space was accessible via an open hatch on the second floor landing and the slate roof covering and battens could also be seen in two small storage/cupboard areas on the northern and southern sides of the building. No evidence of bats or nesting birds was identified in any of these locations and in general, the roof slates all appear intact. Some light ingress into the roof spaces was identified at the eastern and western gables and along the valley associated with the north facing gable end. However a combination of cobwebs and rubble in-fill were observed at each of these locations with the latter likely to limit access for birds/bats.
- 3.8 The doors and windows to all elevations of the building are generally sound with the exception of the broken window pane to the northern elevation. The visible side of the roof (i.e. northern side) and ridge tiles were also sound with no obvious damage or missing sections noted. Along the northern elevation, the window lintels have been replaced and timber fascia have been removed such that the lead flashing at eaves level is raised exposing the wall tops in several locations and providing a possible means of access for bats – no external evidence was noted at any of these locations.
- 3.9 The porch on the northern elevation has a separate pitched slate roof with several raised slates on the northern side. A House Sparrow was seen entering/exiting at the north east corner with nest material visible below the slate – the bird was carrying a foecal sac when exiting confirming that an active nest is present. Bird nesting material – although not confirmed as in current use – was also visible at the eastern gable end and associated with the northern and western gables (see 3.5).
- 3.10 Active nests of House Sparrow and House Martin were confirmed on the adjacent property (No.24) with adults seen entering via a gap in the soffit on the western side of the gable and at the apex respectively.

Potential Flight-paths and Foraging Habitats

- 3.11 The application site offers very limited (if any) foraging habitat for bats, comprising of buildings and hard standing. The immediate surroundings, comprising adjoining residential gardens to the north and south and Victoria Gardens park to the west were considered of Low quality due to the relative isolation of these features from other areas of green space. The properties along Victoria Gardens and the adjacent Ena Avenue to the east are served by a lane at the rear – as a consequence, most of the rear garden areas are used for car parking/garages with very little (if any green space). Victoria Gardens park, is effectively an

island of urban green space surrounded by residential, commercial and other buildings and this is likely to limit its use by foraging bats in the immediate local area. A separate Green Infrastructure Statement & context plan has been prepared by Soltys Brewster Consulting (see Appendix IV) and this identifies that while street trees do extend west into residential areas from the boundary of the Gnoll County Park, this becomes increasingly sporadic in terms of a connection to Victoria Gardens Park via Gnoll Drive/Gnoll Avenue and that street trees/shrubs are absent in the immediate vicinity of No. 22.

Bare ground with colonising vegetation

- 3.12 The site access off the rear lane was characterised by bare ground/hardstanding with some colonising vegetation present (see notes, Appendix III). The vegetation was relatively sparse and primarily associated with the less trafficked areas alongside the house and to the boundary wall with No. 24 (Plate 2). Species present were typical of brownfield colonising species and included both native and non-native species such as Butterfly Bush *Buddleja davidii*, Red Valerian *Valeriana rubra*, Cat's ear *Hypochaeris radicata*, Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*, Sow Thistle *Sonchus* sp., Wood Avens *Geum urbanum* and Hawksbeard *Crepis* sp.

Plate 2 Bare ground with colonising vegetation. Trees within Victoria Gardens park also shown to the west



Invasive Weeds

- 3.13 Several shrubs of Cotoneaster are present at the frontage (west) of the site and are likely to have been planted as ornamental cover (Plate 3). Several species of Cotoneaster are listed as non-native invasives

under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), making it an offence to plant or otherwise encourage such species to grow in the wild.

Plate 3 Cotoneaster shrubs to site frontage



Other Species

- 3.14 With the exception of bats and birds as described in previous sections, the limited features present - i.e. building and bare ground - were not considered suitable for any other protected or otherwise notable species.

4.0 LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND PLANS

- 4.1 The following legislation relating to bats and nesting birds is considered of relevance to the area surveyed and to the proposed refurbishment/conversion works at the site.

Legislation Pertaining to the Protection of Bats

- 4.2 All species of bats in Britain are afforded legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017). This means it is an offence (subject to certain specific exceptions) to deliberately capture or kill/injure a bat, to damage or destroy a place used for shelter or protection (e.g. roosts) or to deliberately disturb a bat in such a place.
- 4.3 Case Law has placed an onus on local planning authorities to satisfy ‘three tests’ under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations when determining applications that could affect European Protected Species. Essentially, these three tests are: i) that there is no satisfactory alternative; ii) that the proposed development is in the over-riding public interest (including those of a social or economic nature) and iii) the proposed development would not adversely affect the Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) of the species locally. Even without the requirement for planning consent in this instance a licence will be required to undertake the works. To obtain a licence from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) the third test will need to be met which means appropriate measures will need to be in place to demonstrate how the works can be achieved without adversely affecting the FCS of the species present.
- 4.4 Bats are also afforded protection within Wales under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) and Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Legislation Pertaining to Birds

- 4.5 Under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) all wild birds are protected against killing or injury and their nests against damage or destruction whilst they are being built or contain eggs/dependent young.

Planning Policy Wales (2024)

- 4.6 This document set out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government with Chapter 6 dealing with Distinctive and Natural Places which covers Biodiversity and Ecological Networks. The advice contained within PPW is supplemented for some subjects by Technical Advice Notes (TAN’s), with TAN 5 addressing Nature Conservation & Planning.

4.7 TAN 5 identifies a number of key principles, which the town and country planning system in Wales should consider. Those relevant are detailed below:

- *Work to achieve nature conservation objectives through a partnership between local planning authorities, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), voluntary organisations, developers, landowners and other key stakeholders;*
- *Integrate nature conservation into all planning decisions looking for development to deliver social, economic and environmental objectives together over time;*
- *Ensure that the UK's international obligations for site, species and habitat protection are fully met in all planning decisions;*
- *Look for development to provide a net benefit for biodiversity conservation with no significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally;*
- *Promoting approaches to development which create new opportunities to enhance biodiversity, prevent biodiversity losses, or compensate for losses where damage is unavoidable. Minimising or reversing the fragmentation of habitats and improving habitat connectivity through the promotion of wildlife corridors;*
- *Local planning authorities should seek to protect trees, groups of trees and areas of woodland where they have natural heritage value or contribute to the character or amenity of a particular locality;*
- *The presence of a species protected under European or UK legislation is a material consideration when a local planning authority is considering a development proposal which, if carried out, would be likely to result in disturbance or harm to the species or its habitat.*

Updates to PPW Chapter 6: Distinctive and Natural Places (October 2023)

4.8 An updated version of PPW: Chapter 6 was published with immediate effect on 11th October 2023 in a published letter to Local Authorities from Julie James AS/MS – Minister for Climate Change³. These changes have now been incorporated as part of the latest edition (February 2024) of PPW. The new guidance provides an update on Net Benefit for Biodiversity and the Step-wise Approach, with extracts considered of relevance to the development site provided below:

Maintaining and Enhancing Biodiversity

4.9 Planning authorities must follow a step- wise approach to maintain and enhance biodiversity, build resilient ecological networks and deliver net benefits for biodiversity by ensuring that any adverse environmental

³ Published letter from Julie James AS/MS (Minister for Climate Change) to Local Authorities – Heads of Planning. Reference: MA/JJ/2512/23. Dated 11th October 2023.

effects are firstly avoided, then minimized, mitigated, and as a last resort compensated for. Enhancement must be secured by delivering a biodiversity benefit primarily on site or immediately adjacent to the site, over and above that required to mitigate or compensate for any negative impact.

- 4.10 All development must deliver a net benefit for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience from the baseline state (proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed). Even if the biodiversity value has been maintained, there must still be a pro-active process to look for and secure enhancement through the design and implementation of the development.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Bats

- 5.1 No evidence of use by roosting bats for the vacant property at No. 22 Victoria Gardens was identified over the course of the survey although the daytime inspection identified a limited number of features that could allow access for bats (or birds) at the gable ends in particular, where access to wall tops and any associated cavity was noted. No evidence of birds or bats was found inside the property – including within the roof space. The site was considered of Low quality in terms of foraging and commuting habitat and is relatively isolated within an existing residential area on the edge of the town centre. The combination of features present at the building and it's context in the local area were such that it was considered of Low bat roost potential.
- 5.2 Under best practice guidelines (BCT 2023), structures of Low bat potential would typically require 1no. activity (emergence or re-entry) survey between May and August to provide a robust appraisal of the likely presence/absence of roosting bats. This level of survey would be recommended for the proposed conversion works at 22 Victoria Gardens. Irregular/occasional use by individual bats in the surrounding area is indicated by the desk study and although the likelihood of bats being present is low, a survey would be recommended prior to the start of works to inform any particular mitigation or licensing requirements (if evidence of bats was found). This survey has been commissioned (instruction received 25 June) and the findings will follow in a separate addendum report (survey is programmed from July 2024).
- 5.3 In the event that the emergence survey identified the presence of roosting bats, a licence application to Natural Resources Wales (NRW) would be required to permit the conversion works to progress – particularly in relation to external features at the building which is where the majority of the bat features were noted. The licence application is supported by a Method Statement setting out the timing, extent and

duration of proposed works and the protective measures to be implemented for bats. Typical measures associated with small roosts of common bat species (e.g. Pipistrelle) are set out below and could be applied to the works at 22 Victoria Gardens - these measures would also be appropriate on a precautionary basis even if further survey indicated likely absence of bats .

- Provision of 2 no. bat boxes or bat access slates suitable for use by roosting Pipistrelle bats (See Appendix V for suitable models & plan in Appendix IV for position). Box location could include the eastern gable end or bat access slates to be provided on the south facing roof aspect to allow access between the roof slates and any new felt or insulation. **Any felt used in the vicinity of bat access slates must be Type 1F bitumen felt – breathable roof membranes are not to be used.**
- Toolbox talk to contractors (by an ecologist) prior to any roofing works to advise on the low risk of bats being present. Works to remove the existing fascia, slates and ridge tiles on the property to be undertaken using hand-tools (e.g. claw hammers, crowbar);
- If bats, or evidence of bats (e.g. droppings) are encountered during the works, all works will be stopped immediately and a licenced bat ecologist or Natural Resources Wales (NRW) contacted for advice on how to proceed. No disturbing works shall re-commence until a licence is in place.

Birds

5.4 The current survey confirmed that at least 1 active nest (House Sparrow) is present at the site, with active nests also confirmed for the adjacent property at No. 24. Conversion works will need to consider the protection afforded to nesting birds and would need to be timed to avoid the bird nesting season, which typically runs from March – August inclusive. As described for bats, this timing restriction would only apply to the external building features – no constraints relating to birds were associated with the interior of the property. If the proposed works are to be undertaken during the breeding bird season (i.e. between March – August), a prior check for nesting birds will be required - if an active bird nest is found bird, no works can be undertaken until all chicks have fledged and the nest is no longer active.

5.5 In order to provide mitigation/enhancements for nesting birds as part of the development, the following would be recommended:

- Design of any external finishes so as to maintain access to the wall tops at the northern and western gables (i.e. retain existing features). Where this was not possible, inclusion of 2no. House Sparrow nest box on the northern and eastern elevation of the building – the boxes could be positioned at eaves level of the single storey extension. Box Example boxes are shown in Appendix V with positioning illustrated on the GI plan in Appendix IV.
- Provision of 2no. House Martin nest cups under eaves at the eastern gable end (or at western or northern gables dependent on House Sparrow provision);

Other Considerations/Enhancements

5.6 The adoption of the recommendations set out in sections 5.3 – 5.5 include avoidance, mitigation and enhancements (i.e. increased nesting/roosting provision) for birds and bats. Other enhancement measures which could be implemented as part of the proposed works include:

- Use of native species or those with a known wildlife benefit to be included for any Soft Landscape planting proposed. Use of a flowering lawn mix is identified on the plan in Appendix IV;
- Removal of Cotoneaster shrubs and replacement with native shrub or hedgerow species as part of landscape planting;

REFERENCES

Bat Conservation Trust (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines*. Bat Conservation Trust, London. 4th Edition.

CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

APPENDIX I SITE LOCATION PLAN & PROPOSED PLANS



This Drawing is Copyright. ©

Note: All dimensions to be checked on site and not to be scaled from drawing.

AMENDMENTS:	
Revision	Date

BUCKMASTERBATCUP
Architects Ltd.

CLIENT:
Caredig H.A.

PROJECT TITLE:
**22 Victoria Gardens,
Neath**

DRAWING TITLE:
Location Plan

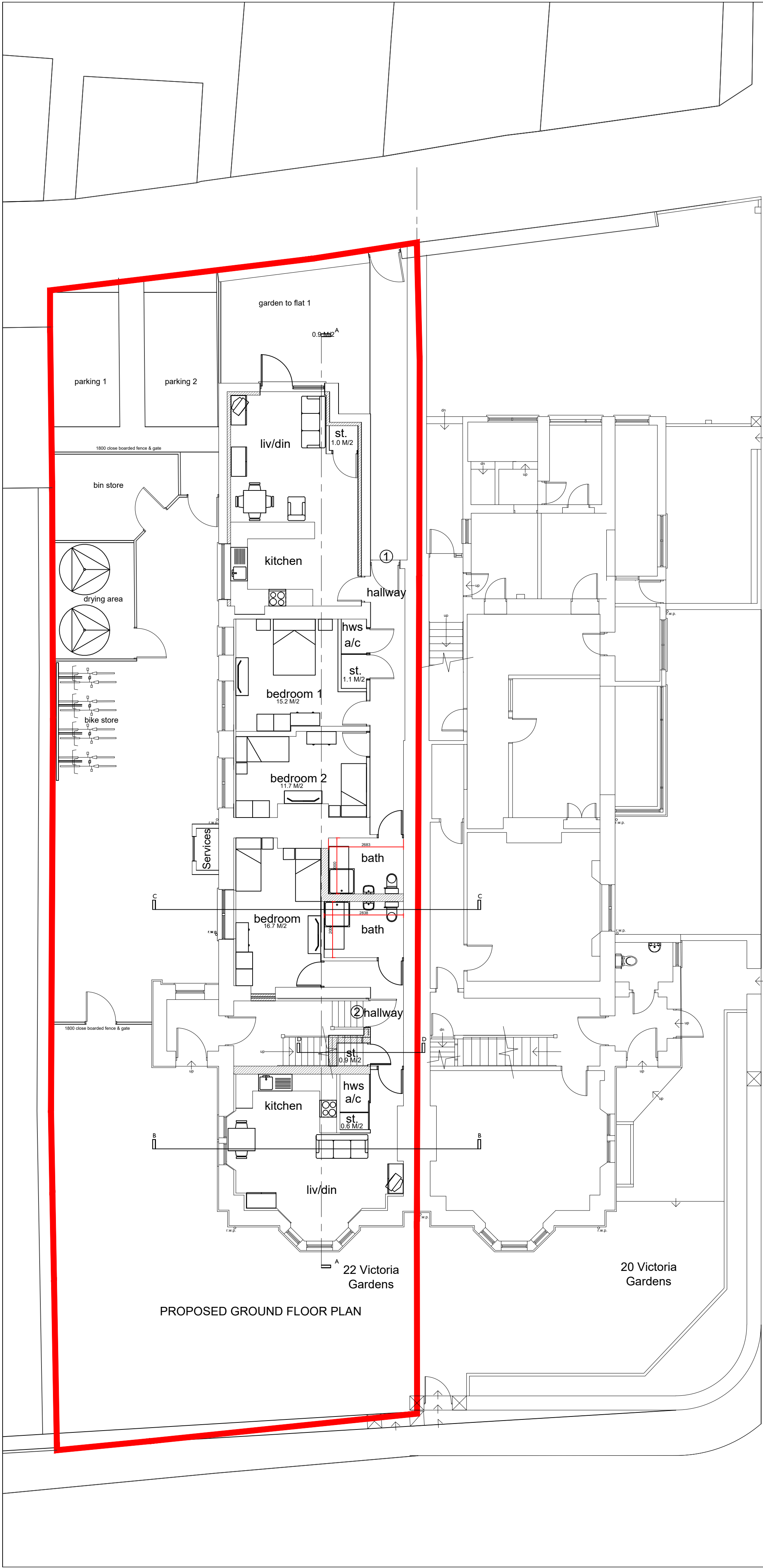
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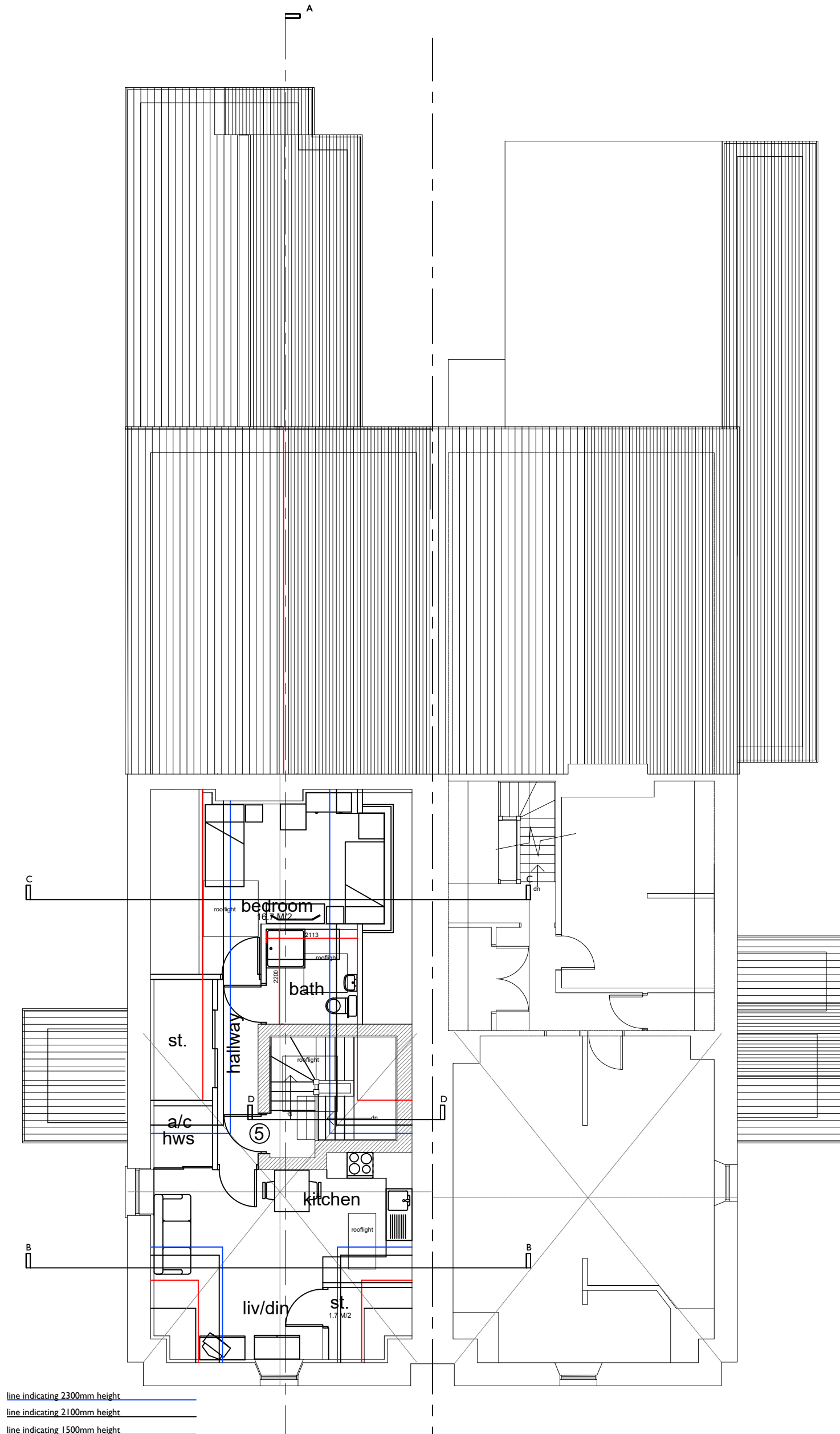
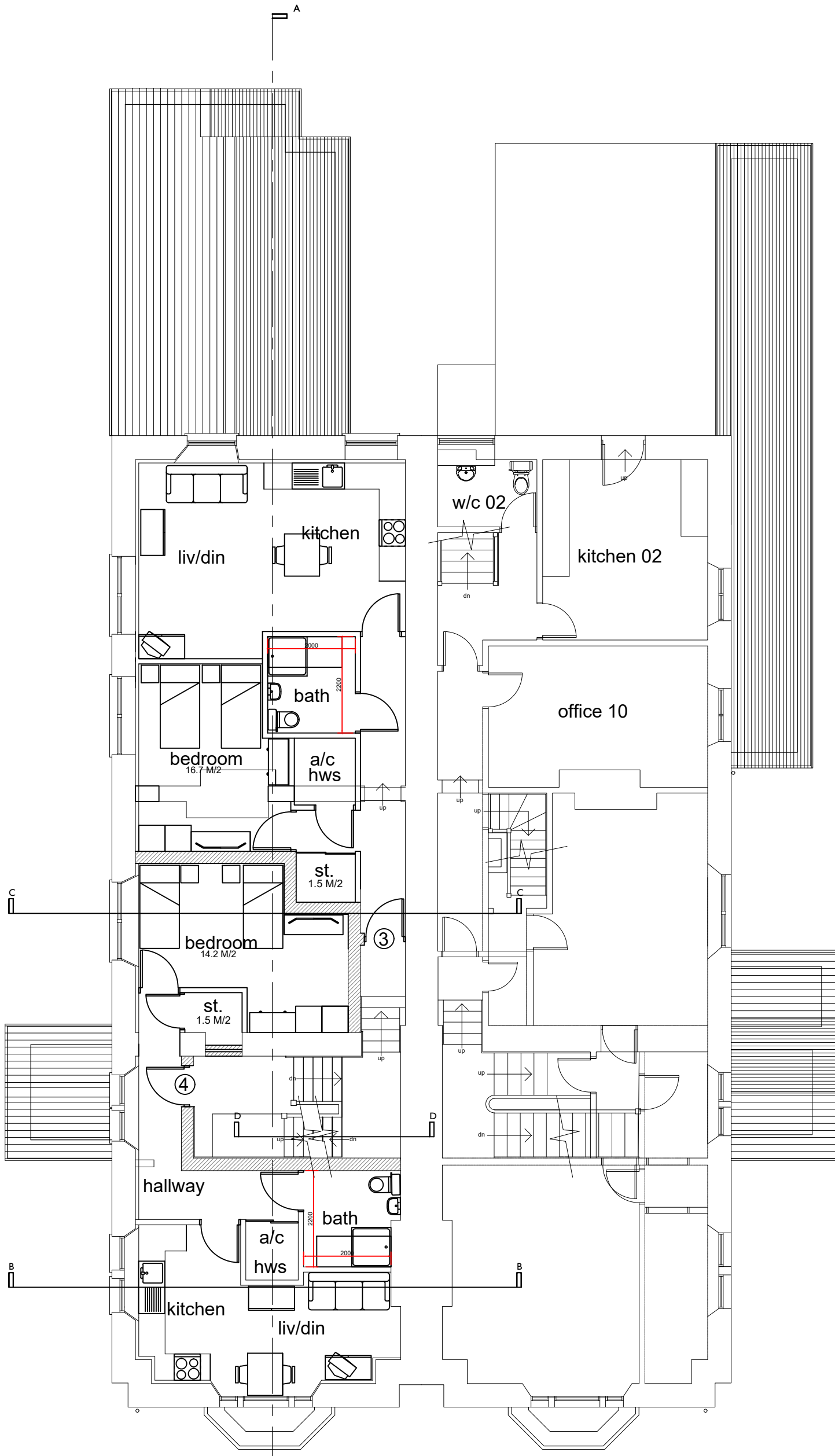
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Paddington Central
London, W2 6BD

BBA 940/01

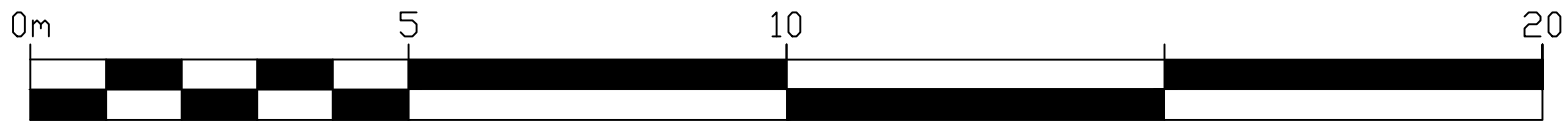




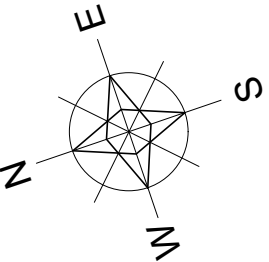
EXISTING BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN



DRAWINGS ISSUED SUBJECT TO FUTURE MEASURED SURVEY



SCALE: 1:100



KEY	
FLAT 1 - 2 b/4p Flat	86 M/2
FLAT 2 - 1 b/2p Flat	60 M/2
FLAT 3 - 1 b/2p Flat	57 M/2
FLAT 4 - 1 b/2p Flat	49.2 M/2
FLAT 5 - 1 b/2p Flat	50.2 M/2
	38.2 M/2

min 1.5M
min 2.3M

This Drawing is Copyright. ©

Note: All dimensions to be checked on site and not to be scaled from drawing.

AMENDMENTS:
Revision Date

BUCKMASTERBATCUP
Architects Ltd.

CLIENT:
CAREDIG Housing Association

PROJECT TITLE:
22 Victoria Gardens, Neath,
SA11 3AA

DRAWING TITLE:
Sketch Floor Plans

SCALE: 1:100 @ A1 DATE: Feb. 2024

SWANSEA 70 Water Road Swansea, SA1 4QA T - 01792 466060 F - 01792 644646 www.bbarch.co.uk info@bbarch.co.uk	LONDON One Kingdom Street Paddington Central London, W2 6BD BBA 940.P.03A
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APPENDIX II DESK STUDY INFORMATION PROVIDED BY SEWBRcC

Species records are mapped below. Records are mapped as centred points (centre of grid reference polygon).



Icon	Name
	Bats
	Birds

APPENDIX III TARGET NOTES & PHOTOGRAPHS (JUNE 2024)

RECORD OF SITE VISIT	
SITE NAME	22 Victoria Gardens, Neath
DATE	17 June 2024
PURPOSE OF VISIT	Walkover survey including preliminary building inspection for protected species to inform planning submission for refurbishment/conversion works.
General	Two storey Victorian semi-detached property of stone construction with pitched slate roof. More recent brick-built single storey extension to eastern elevation with relatively new slate roof. Site is located on busy residential street opposite Victoria Gardens (public park), Neath. Some repair works (e.g. window lintels to eastern elevation) undertaken and interior of the house is effectively a shell ahead of conversion works. Attic space already converted into rooms although roof void is accessible via a hatch on the second floor landing. Building is located on Victoria Gardens/Gnoll Park Road Bridge Road amongst other residential properties with no direct green connections to habitats in the immediate local area. Victoria Gardens comprises of amenity space with mown grass areas, shrub/flower beds and mix of native and ornamental trees – this green space is isolated by surrounding residential., commercial and school buildings. Gnoll Estate Country Park located ca. 450m east but poor connectivity to this large area of greenspace. Adjoining building (No. 20) is currently undergoing refurbishment works. Building with several Potential Roost Features (PRF) and at least 1 no. active bird nest (House Sparrow). No internal or external evidence of bats found and considered of Low Bat potential.
Birds seen/heard:	House Martin, House Sparrow
Interior of Building	Interior of the building is vacant/empty with all furniture removed ahead of conversion works. Front door is secure with no obvious means of access for birds/bats. Ground floor rooms with painted walls/ceilings all in reasonable condition – no obvious bat features identified and no evidence of birds or bats. Window shutters are present to living room at site frontage and these are secure & kept shut (opened during inspection survey).



Broken glass in window to Northern elevation would allow access but no evidence to suggest birds or bats present. All other ground floor windows are sound.



Rear extension to east with relatively new slate roof and open roof space with trussed rafters – no evidence of birds or bats noted.



Rear door with daylight visible around the edges although external vegetation (Ivy) also present and partially obscuring any access.

	Basement is flooded to depth of ca. 150 – 200mm and no direct access. Basement door is open but no evidence on steps leading down and no obvious means of access (from exterior) into the basement.  First floor rooms are all well lit with sash windows all intact – no obvious means of access for birds or bats and no evidence noted. Airing cupboard to first floor landing is a dark area (door slightly ajar) but no evidence noted. Some light ingress around door/window board to east end of first floor corridor but no evidence of birds or bats found. Second floor attic rooms have been partially converted in the past with ceilings boarded/plastered. Two small areas on southern and northern elevations where roof slates are visible – no obvious light ingress or means of access into these areas and no evidence of birds or bats found. Windows to second floor all sound. 
Roof Space	Single accessible roof void with open hatch to second floor landing. Slates visible above roof battens with no felt or other insulation present. Timber ridge beam is heavily cobwebbed throughout. Obvious light ingress at valley of small dormer to north elevation but this also heavily cobwebbed inside.

	 Some light ingress at eastern gable end but rubble infill is present which is likely to obstruct/block possible access. Roof timbers heavily cobwebbed.  No evidence of birds or bats found within accessible areas of roofspace – western gable end not accessible (light ingress visible here).
Building Exterior – Eastern extension and gable end	New slate roof and PVC fascia to extension with gaps noted between fascia and brickwork – no external (or internal) evidence to suggest use by bats noted.

	 Eastern gable with render removed and gaps evident to both sides of apex at wall tops. Old bird nest material visible to northern side. Numerous gaps at wall tops could allow access for birds or bats – no external evidence of bats noted.
North Elevation	Roof slates and ridge tiles are generally sound with no obvious damaged or missing sections. Fascia to this elevation has been removed and new window lintels installed – this has resulted in lead flashing being offering numerous gaps to the wall top and area under the flashing. No external evidence noted.
Porch (North elevation)	Gaps around timber decorative fascia at eastern gable end – access to wall tops and any wall void noted. No external evidence of bats.  Active Sparrow nest located to NE corner under raised slate – adult bird seen entering and leaving with foecal sac. Pitched roof is sound with no missing or damaged tiles noted although several raised tiles noted towards ridge line. Ridge tiles and mortar are sound and mortar also intact to end tiles above eaves. Timber fascia to eaves of pitched roof is sound although gap noted between the fascia and the wall which could allow bat access – no visible external evidence of use (e.g. droppings or staining) noted.

Northern Gable	Numerous gaps noted between fascia and stonework allowing access to tops of walls. Bird splashing noted on stonework suggesting previous (or current) - nest material visible to wall tops. 
West gable	Gaps between fascia and stonework as noted for north gable. Large crack in window lintel also visible but no external evidence of bats. 
Hard Standing & colonising vegetation	Bare ground and colonising vegetation to northern side of building and frontage to west. Typical mix of species noted including Cat's ear, Herb Robert, Ivy-leaved Toadflax (to boundary wall), Wood Avens, Dandelion, Buddleja seedlings, Red Valerian, Meadow Grass (<i>Poa</i> sp.), Yorkshire Fog, Hawksbeard (<i>Crepis</i> sp.) Sow Thistle (<i>Sonchus</i> sp.) Foxglove and Himalayan Honeysuckle. Several established shrubs of Cotoneaster to site frontage – Schedule 9 invasive species.

**No. 24 Victoria
Gardens**

Gable end of property to the north (No. 24) used by nesting House Martin and Sparrow – former seen entering/exiting at apex with House Sparrow using gap in soffit to west side.



APPENDIX IV GREEN INFRA-STRUCTURE CONTEXT PLAN & GI PLAN



- KEY**
-  Site Boundary
 -  Site of Importance of Nature Conservation (SINC)
 -  Primary Green Infrastructure Corridors

PL01	18.06.24	First issue	SB	TK
Rev.	Date	Comment	Approved	Drawn

PRELIMINARY	PLANNING	DESIGN	TENDER	CONSTRUCTION
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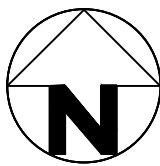
o client/project							o drawing									
CAREDIG Housing Association							Green Infrastructure Context Plan									
22 Victoria Gardens																
o drawing no.							o revision		o scale		o drawn		o approved		o date	
2489401 - SBC - 00 - XX - FI - L - 100							PL01		N.T.S @ A3		TK		SB		Jun 2024	
SB Project Number							Originator		Zone		Level		Type		Role Number	

soltysbrewster

4 Stangate House
Stanwell Road
Penarth
Vale of Glamorgan
CF64 2AA

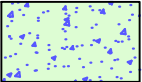
Telephone:- + 44(0) 33 0013 0012
e-mail:- enquiry@soltysbrewster.co.uk

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KEY

 Proposed Formal Hedge

 Proposed Flowering Lawn Mix

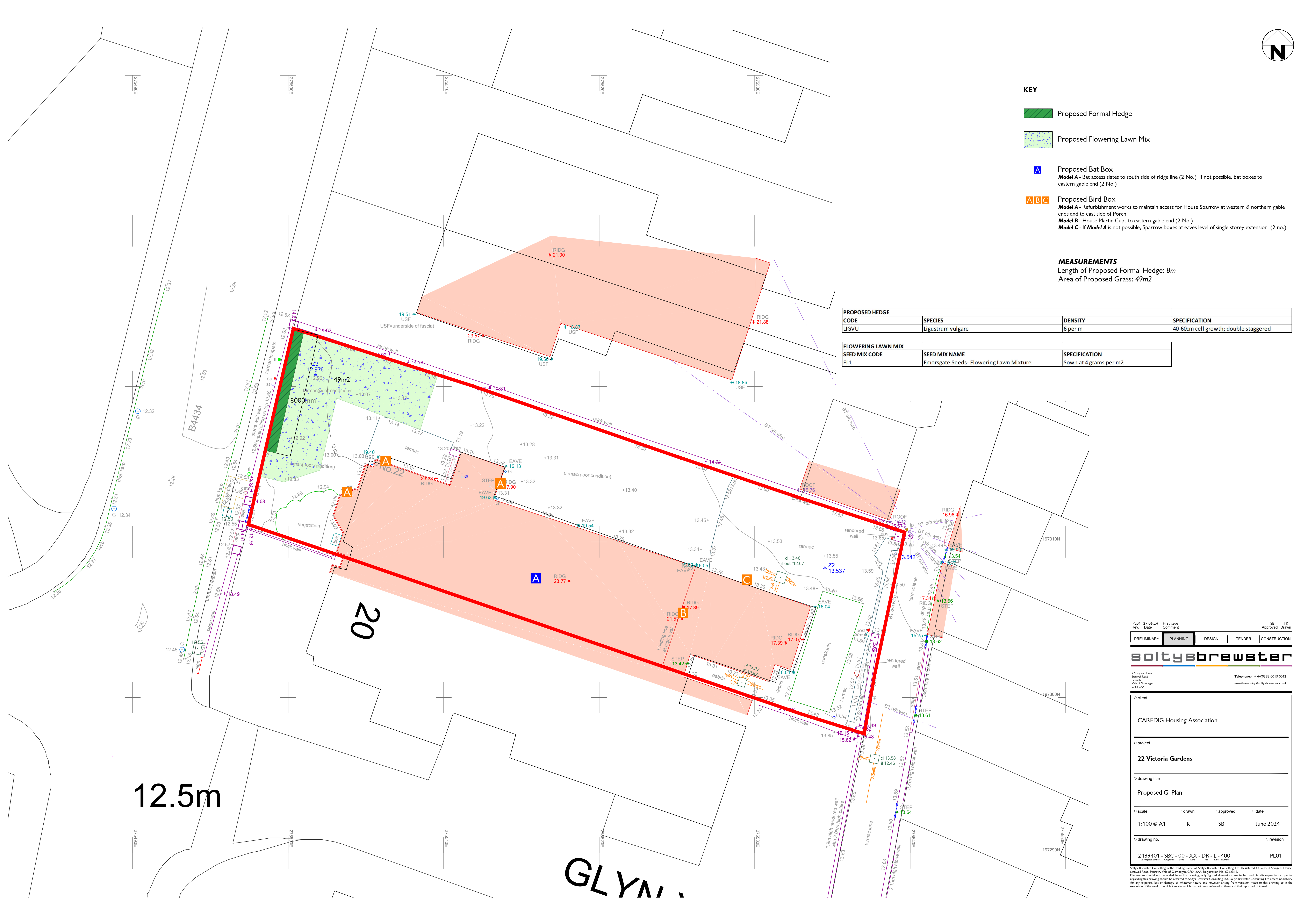
-  Proposed Bat Box
Model A - Bat access slates to south side of ridge line (2 No.) If not possible, bat boxes to eastern gable end (2 No.)
-  Proposed Bird Box
Model A - Refurbishment works to maintain access for House Sparrow at western & northern gable ends and to east side of Porch
Model B - House Martin Cups to eastern gable end (2 No.)
Model C - If **Model A** is not possible, Sparrow boxes at eaves level of single storey extension (2 no.)

MEASUREMENTS

Length of Proposed Formal Hedge: 8m
Area of Proposed Grass: 49m2

PROPOSED HEDGE			
CODE	SPECIES	DENSITY	SPECIFICATION
LIGVU	Ligustrum vulgare	6 per m	40-60cm cell growth; double staggered

FLOWERING LAWN MIX		
SEED MIX CODE	SEED MIX NAME	SPECIFICATION
EL1	Emorsgate Seeds- Flowering Lawn Mixture	Sown at 4 grams per m2



PL01	27.06.24	First Issue	SB	TK
Rev.	Date	Comment	Drawn	Approved

PRELIMINARY	PLANNING	DESIGN	TENDER	CONSTRUCTION
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client

CAREDIG Housing Association

project

22 Victoria Gardens

drawing title

Proposed GI Plan

scale	drawn	approved	date
1:100 @ A1	TK	SB	June 2024

drawing no.	revision
2489401 - SBC - 00 - XX - DR - L - 400	PL01

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APPENDIX V ENHANCEMENT FEATURE EXAMPLES

All boxes must be installed according to the suppliers' instructions.



Beaumaris Woodstone Bat Box - Available at: <https://www.nhbs.com/beaumaris-woodstone-bat-box> (accessed 04/04/2024)

Bat Access Slate – available at: <https://www.nhbs.com/habibat-bat-access-slate>



Vivara Pro WoodStone House Sparrow Nest Box – Available at: <https://www.nhbs.com/vivara-pro-woodstone-house-sparrow-nest-box> (accessed 04/04/2024)



<https://www.nhbs.com/house-martin-nests>

