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POTENTIAL TREE BAT ROOST SURVEYS

FORMER TUDOR INN SITE, CIMLA

ON BEHALF OF

TAI TARIAN LTD

November 2024

Ref: HE/15/2024 Bat Tree Close Inspection issue 3

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All habitat and protected species surveys present a ‘snapshot’ of conditions existing and species present, or considered having potential to be present, at the time of survey. Many species are mobile and distributions can vary across time. Results and findings presented in this report should be considered with these factors in mind.

Protected species surveys are recognised as having a ‘shelf life’ of two years maximum. Surveys older than this are unlikely to be accepted by a Local Planning Authority or Natural Resources Wales as viable documentation without just cause.

CONTENTS

Summary	4
1. Introduction	5
2. Surveyor Experience	5
3. Methodology and Constraints	5
4. Field Survey Findings	7
5. Discussion and Impact Assessment	8
6. Relevant Legislation	8
7. Recommendations	9
8. Conclusions	10
9. Bibliography	10

FIGURES

Figure 1: Location of Trees Assessed

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Photographs

SUMMARY

Hawkeswood Ecology was instructed to carry out protected species surveys on land at Tudor Inn, Cimla, Neath in 2023. As part of a suite of surveys undertaken a Ground Level Tree Assessment was undertaken in relation to the trees on Site having potential to support roosting bats. The results of that GLTA were reported in 2024 where 29 trees or groups of trees were assessed for roosting potential, of which 8 were considered to be of medium potential to support roosting bats, the remainder either negligible or low potential.

The current survey was undertaken by experienced climbing bat workers to assess the value of the trees in an aerial inspection. All trees on Site were re-assessed from the ground before climbing, then climbed to quantify whether Potential Roost Features were present or not.

These surveys were undertaken in 2024 for Hawkeswood Ecology using methodologies detailed within the report reflecting current best practice at the time of survey.

The survey outcome reported 13 trees or groups of trees needed a climbing survey to assess roost potential. Of these only one was found to support a single PRF (PRF-1) and a recommendation is made for a pre-start check should the tree be affected by the works. The current plans involve retention of this tree and as there are no bat roosts reported no impacts are foreseen from the implementation of the proposed development.

The conclusions of this report are considered valid for two years from the survey dates noted in Section 1 of the report.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Following an earlier Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) carried out by Hawkeswood Ecology in 2023, a climbing bat roost survey was instructed by Tai Tarian Ltd to properly assess the trees on Site. The original GLTA is reported in '*Protected Species Surveys, Land at the former Tudor Inn Site, Cimla, Neath. Hawkeswood Ecology – January 2024*' which should be read in conjunction with this report. The Site lies at approximate central Grid Reference SS 76051 96013 and lies on the edge of the Cimla conurbation. It is proposed to develop the Site for residential purposes.
- 1.2 In 2023 twenty nine trees or groups of trees were assessed of which 8 were considered to be of medium bat roost potential. The climbing survey was undertaken to review these result and was undertaken to the standards and guidance laid out in the bat Conservation trust Document '*Professional bat Surveys, Good Practice Guidance, 4th edition 2023*'.
- 1.3 The GLTA review and climbing survey was undertaken over the weekend of 24th – 25th August 2024.

2 SURVEYOR EXPERIENCE

- 2.1 The GLTA and climbing surveys were undertaken by Aaron Davies and Matt Dowling (Eryr Gwyn Ecology). Aaron and Matt are experienced and licensed tree climbing bat ecologists with a wealth of experience in all types of bat work. Aaron is heavily involved in voluntary bat work with the Glamorgan Bat Group. Aaron's Natural Resources Wales licence number is S085246-1, Matt's is S087707-1.

3 METHODOLOGY AND CONSTRAINTS

- 3.1 A desktop study was undertaken as part of the 2023 report.
- 3.2 A visual inspection was carried out from the ground using binoculars. The inspection looked for features on the trees that could offer potential for roosting bats.
- 3.3 The surveys comprised a close inspection of all Potential Roost Features (PRFs) within each tree by appropriately qualified and licensed ecologists (NPTC CS38 tree climbing and aerial rescue, Natural Resources Wales Bat Licence). Inspections were undertaken using a small torch and endoscope (Ridgid SeeSnake CA300), as required, determining the degree of suitability of each PRF to support roosting bats and to search for any evidence of bats having previously been present. As well as ground survey, both climbing and use of a camera on a pole were made to inspect potential PRF's.
- 3.4 In addition to the information collected during the ground assessment, the following information was recorded during the tree climbing survey for each PRF if required:
 - approximate internal dimensions;

- dry or wet;
- evidence of use by birds, squirrels or other non-bat species;
- clean or dusty / dirty;
- evidence of bat activity (smoothing of internal surfaces, droppings, bat fly (Nycteribiid) pupae, feeding remains, staining); and/or
- presence, number and species of bats observed.

3.5 The Surveyor categorised the suitability of all PRFs as shown in Table 1. Recommendations were made according to the level of PRF found.

Table 1: Risk Assessment features for bat-roost potential during tree inspection (After Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists- Good Practice Guidelines – 4th Edition' –Bat Conservation Trust 2023):

Suitability	Roosting
Negligible potential	No features likely to be used by roosting bats.
PRF-1	PRF is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable habitat. No further survey required but precautions to be taken at the works stage.
PRF-2	PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony. Requires three visits through the season with at least two in the period of May to August.

Constraints

3.5 No specific constraints to the survey were noted.

4 FIELD SURVEY FINDINGS

4.1 The survey identified only one tree with a low level PRF (PRF-1).

4.2 The results are given in Table 2 below and locations of trees shown in Figure 1:

Tree ID	Outcome	Notes	Recommendations
1812	PRF-I	Cypress - Wound, 3m West. Extends up 10cm, 4cm diameter, tapering, clean, woodlice	Pre-works check (if felled)
1815	None	Failed stem, open/exposed, no roost suitability	
1824	None	Chestnut - small wound, 2.5m west. superficial	
1825	None	Chestnut - Stem splits after 1m, no PRFs visible	
1826	None	Chestnut - no PRFs visible	
1828	None	Cypress - two large open bowls in stem, do not extend in, superficial	
1831	None	Hawthorn - on boundary, several superficial wounds, all superficial	
T1	None	Cypress - frost crack on southern aspect, does not lead in. Wound on main stem at 2m south, superficial	
T2	None	Sycamore - several superficial knotholes that do not lead in	
T3	None	Sycamore – Multi-stemmed on boundary. No visible PRFs	
1833	None	Sycamore - Two trees with Ivy on all aspects, not enough to form or obscure PRFs, No PRFs observed	
T4	None	Oak - Ivy, not dense enough to form or obscure features	
T5	None	Goat Willow – Multi-stemmed. No PRFs Visible	

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The trees assessed were found to be mainly of negligible potential when considered against the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Bat Survey Guidelines, 2023 (The Guidelines). Only one tree displayed a Potential Roost Feature and this was classified as PRF-1.
- 5.2 At this level of finding, The Guidelines state no further survey is considered necessary, although a pre-survey inspection is required if the tree needs to be managed or felled as part of the development. The plans show this tree is retained and if so no further actions are necessary.

Predicted Impact

- 5.3 **No significant impacts** are foreseen on bats as a result of the development proposals in regard to tree works.

6. RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

Bats

- 6.1 All UK bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Schedule 5 of this act makes it illegal to intentionally kill, injure or take bats. It is also an offence to intentionally damage or destroy their place of rest. In 2007 the offences of killing, injuring or taking species under Section 9(1), 9(2) and 9(4)a of European Protected Species listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were removed to avoid duplication with their protection under Annex IV of the European Communities Council Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora (The Habitats Directive) as amended. The regulations remove the defence of inadvertent or accidental damage to roosts and make the offence ‘absolute’.
- 6.2 Further all bat species are protected under Annex IV of the European Communities Council Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora (The Habitats Directive) as amended which requires the United Kingdom government to provide bats with strict protection. The Habitats Directive is transcribed into England and Wales Law by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and consolidated into UK post Brexit legislation by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) 2019; this legislation consolidates amendments made to the earlier 2010 act with the 2019 amendment altering wording to satisfy its status as UK legislation post Brexit. This legislation states in Part 3, Protection of Species, paragraph 43(1) that a person who:
- (a) deliberately captures, injures or kills any wild animal of a European protected species,
 - (b) deliberately disturbs wild animals of any such species,
 - (c) deliberately takes or destroys the eggs of such an animal, or
 - (d) damages or destroys a breeding site or resting place of such an animal,
- is committing an offence.
- 6.3 Further, with regard to disturbance of EPS, Paragraph 43(2) that disturbance is an act which is likely to:
- (a) to impair their ability—
 - (i) to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or
 - (ii) in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or

(b) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.

- 6.4 In the case of a development involving the loss or modification of a building which may affect bats the above legislation must be considered and it may be necessary to apply to Natural Resources Wales for a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL).
- 6.5 The introduction of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 has removed the defence of killing or injuring a protected species during a lawful operation, thus even in an instance where planning permission is granted, the presence of bats must be considered and mitigated for prior to commencement of works. Under the above regulations, a WAG licence can only be given if three tests are satisfied:
- The action proposed is in the interest of preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance to the environment;
 - That there is not a satisfactory alternative;
 - That the action proposed will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.
- 6.6 Failure to satisfy the regulations and obtain an EPSL where required is likely to result in prosecution and can lead to severe fines of up to £5000 per bat and possible imprisonment.
- 6.7 Eight species of bat are listed under section 7 of the Environment Wales Act (2106). Section 7 of the Act provides a list of living organisms of principal importance for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in relation to Wales. This is a list of species considered at threat within Wales and in need of conservation management to maintain and enhance population numbers.
- 6.8 A duty is placed on the Local Authority by the Welsh Assembly Government to maintain and enhance populations of species listed in Section 7.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Should it be necessary to undertake works on Tree ID 1812 a pre-commencement inspection will be necessary.
- 7.2 Bats, and other nocturnal animals can be affected by artificial light spill. Consideration will therefore be given to the level of external lighting around the Site and a detailed lighting scheme should be produced and agreed with the Local Planning Authority. Artificial lighting will take into consideration the details provided by the guidance note 08/18 produced by the Bat Conservation Trust and the Institution of Lighting Professionals. preferably lighting should have a wavelength of above 550nm and produce a 'warm orange' light.
- 7.3 Artificial lighting will be located with consideration for bats and will avoid adjacent areas, in particular the undeveloped areas to the north and the adjacent farmhouse and buildings. Any domestic lighting will be placed at a level lower than three metres, be cast to the ground with no

up-lighting and will ideally be on a time switch to ensure any resultant light scatter is limited in duration; it should only be used in areas where safety is a consideration.

- 7.4 Other relevant recommendations regarding bats are given in the Protected Species report ‘*Protected Species Surveys, Land at the former Tudor Inn Site, Cimla, Neath. Hawkeswood Ecology – January 2024*’.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 Re-assessment of ground level inspections and further climbing surveys found no evidence of potential roost opportunities for bats on Site apart from one tree showing a single PRF-1 category opportunity.
- 8.2 A recommendation is made in Section 7 to ensure that should works be required on this tree, ID 1812, they will be carried out in accordance with relevant legislation.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, 2017, HMG.

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The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

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Mitchell Jones, A J & Robertson C J (Eds) *Bat workers Manual*, 3rd Edition, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 2004

Bat Conservation Trust (2016), *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

**FIGURE 1:
LOCATION OF TREES ASSESSED**

Potential Tree Bat Roost Surveys, Former Tudor Inn, Cimla.
Hawkeswood Ecology – November 2024

Figure 1: Location of trees assessed



APPENDIX 1
PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1

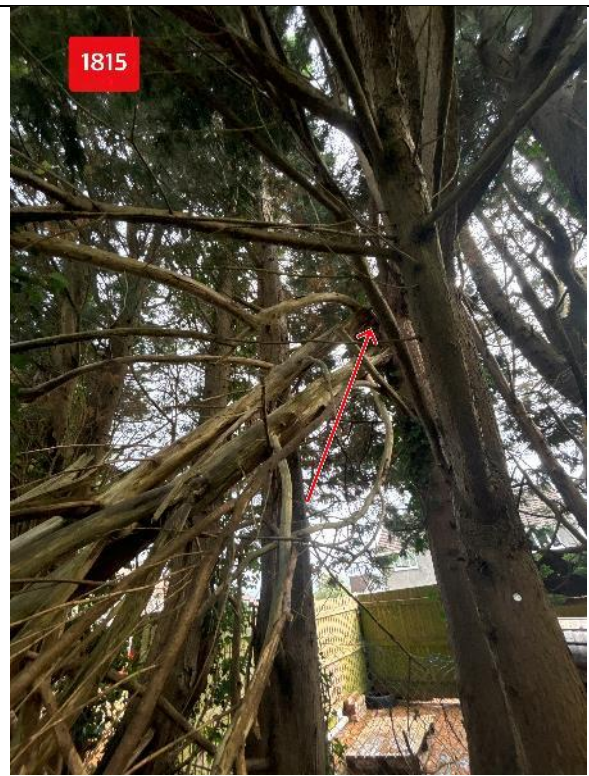


Photo 2

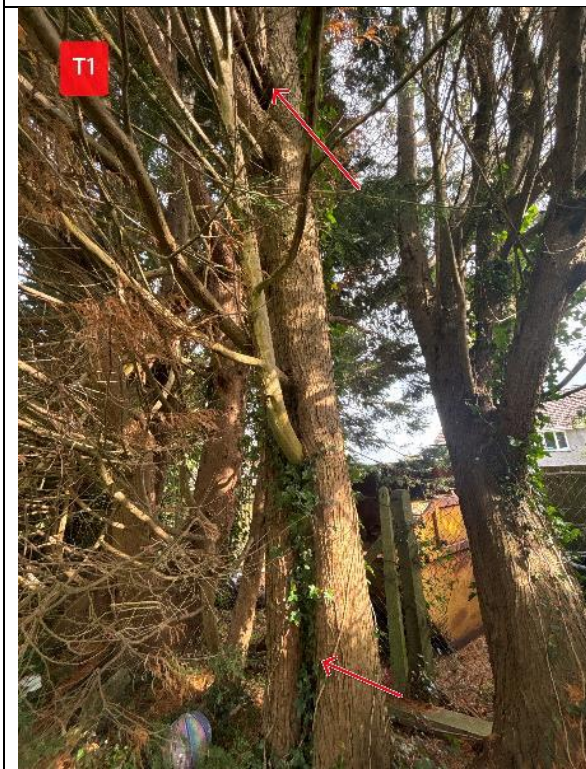


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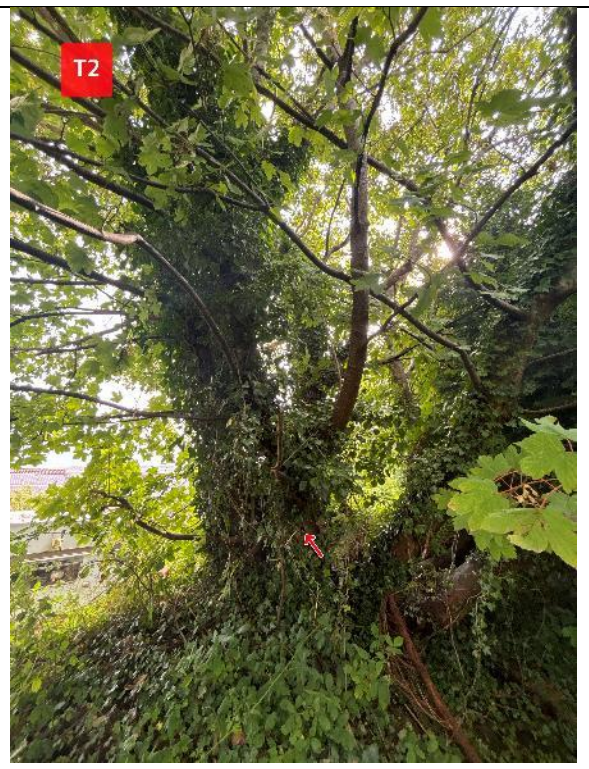


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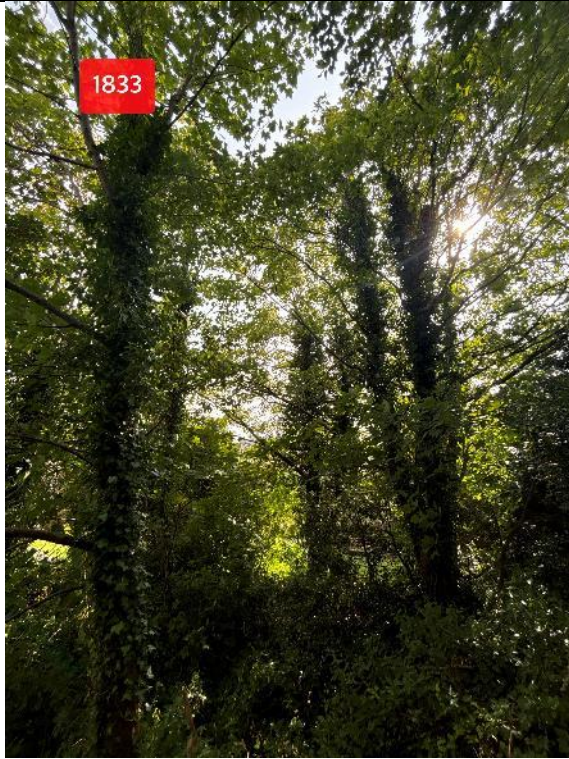


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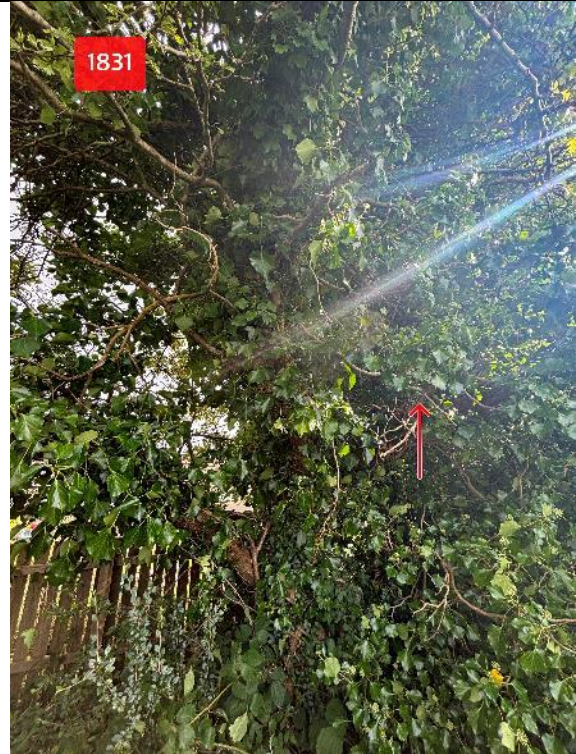


Photo 6



Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9

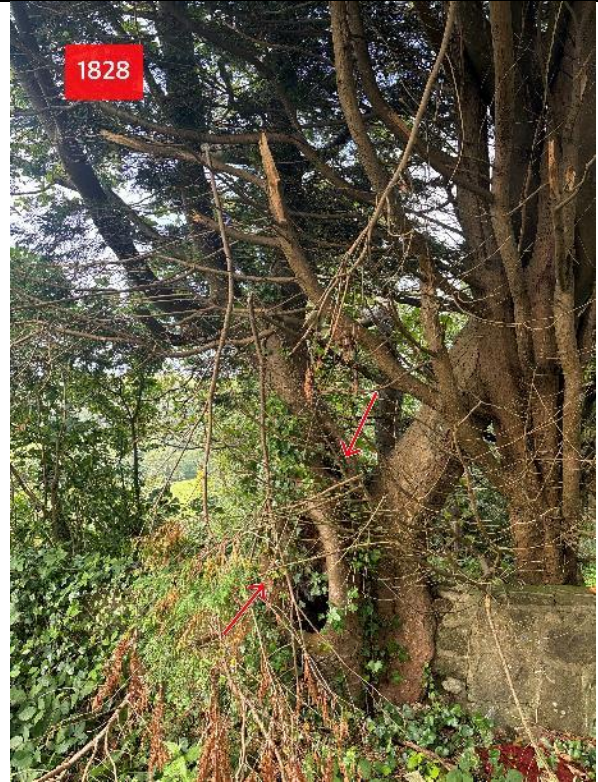


Photo 10



Photo 11

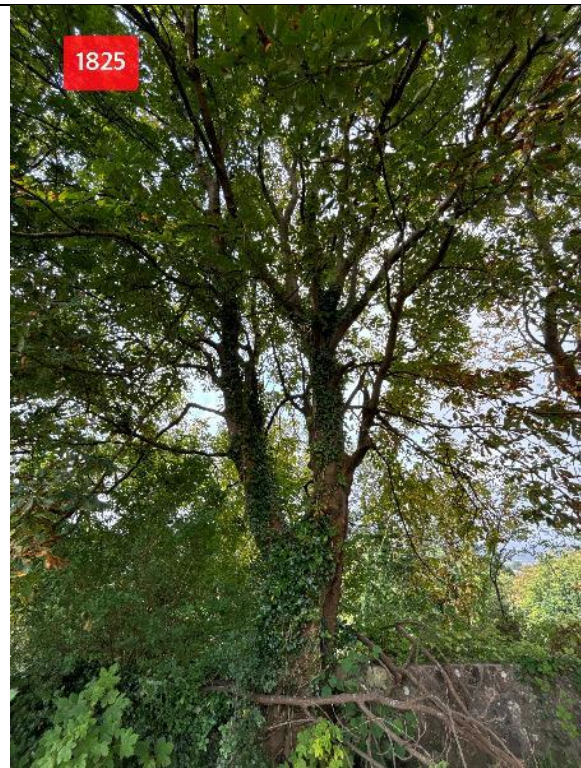


Photo 12

 A photograph of a large tree trunk, likely a bat tree, showing a close-up of the bark. A red arrow points to a specific area on the trunk. A red box with the number 1824 is in the top left corner.	
Photo 13	

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