



Margam Country Park Gatehouse

Bat Report

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DECLARATION

The information, advice and opinions which we have prepared and provided is true and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the CIEEM's Code of Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Price', with a stylized 'M' and 'P'.

Megan Price

Ecologist (Consultancy & Planning)

The following report is considered a reasonable and true representation of the ecological situation on the site assessed. The report is however just a snapshot assessment therefore the authors are unable to guarantee that all biodiversity interest has been identified. In addition, if works are not undertaken, a programmed re-assessment will be required. The survey information is considered applicable for two years from the date of the survey.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Gatehouse at the entrance to Margam Country Park is proposed to be demolished and replaced with a new Visitor Arrival Centre, incorporating a shop/information space and improved visitor facilities.

The development has been designed with careful consideration of its location within a Grade I Registered Historic Park and Garden, ensuring that the proposed structure is appropriate in scale, appearance, and layout, and that it preserves the character and setting of the wider landscape.

The existing gatehouse is a small timber structure of limited architectural merit, in poor condition, and functionally constrained, and its replacement is intended to provide a higher-quality, durable, and accessible facility for visitors to the park.

Ecological survey work has been undertaken to inform the proposals. A Preliminary Roost Assessment identified features with moderate potential to support roosting bats, and two dusk emergence surveys were subsequently carried out in appropriate seasonal and weather conditions. No evidence of bats emerging from or returning to the building was recorded, during either survey, and no roosting behaviour was observed.

Bat activity was recorded within the surrounding parkland, including foraging and commuting behaviour, which reflects the high-quality habitat present within Margam Country Park. However, this activity was not associated with the building itself.

Based on the survey findings, the building is considered unlikely to be used as a bat roost at the time of survey, and no further bat surveys are considered necessary to support the planning application.

In accordance with statutory biodiversity duties under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the scheme incorporates a range of ecological enhancement measures, including:

- Provision of a dedicated bat roost space within the new structure
- Installation of integrated bird boxes
- Creation of a bug hotel

The proposed development will therefore deliver a net ecological benefit, whilst improving visitor infrastructure and maintaining the historic and landscape character of the site.

Overall, the proposals are considered to be appropriate, policy compliant, and environmentally acceptable, with no significant adverse impacts on protected species or ecological receptors anticipated.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 SITE LOCATION

At the time of writing, the Gatehouse of Margam Country Park is proposed to be subject to renovation works. Location is shown on the aerial photograph below. Grid reference for the centre of the building is SS 80188 86079. Figure 1 below highlights the location of the Gatehouse building.



Figure 1 - Location of Gatehouse shown in red square

Margam Country Park comprises a Grade I Registered Historic Park and Garden, containing notable features such as Margam Castle and the Orangery, as well as extensive areas of managed parkland.

The application site is situated within the main visitor arrival area, adjacent to estate access roads and existing visitor infrastructure.

The immediate surroundings comprise:

- Areas of managed grassland and hardstanding parking
- Mature trees and woodland belts
- The ornamental gardens located to the north of the gatehouse

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development comprises the demolition of the existing gatehouse at the entrance to Margam Country Park and the construction of a new Visitor Arrival Centre.

The new building will provide improved visitor facilities, including a shop and information area and a covered visitor arrival space.

The structure will be single-storey and designed to remain modest in scale, ensuring it sits appropriately within the historic parkland setting.

The development also includes associated landscaping, access improvements, and drainage works, with the layout designed to maintain existing movement patterns and integrate with the current visitor arrival area.

The existing gatehouse is of limited architectural merit, in poor condition, and functionally constrained, and its replacement will provide a more suitable and durable facility for visitors.

1.3 SCOPE OF SURVEY

The purpose of the survey was to assess the ecological value of the site, with particular regard to its potential to support bats and other protected species, and to inform the proposed redevelopment.

The survey aimed to:

- Identify the presence or likely absence of roosting bats within the existing building
- Assess the suitability of the building and surrounding habitats to support bat foraging and commuting activity
- Identify any other ecological constraints, including the potential presence of nesting birds
- Evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed development on identified ecological receptors
- Determine whether further survey effort was required to adequately characterise the site
- Provide appropriate recommendations to avoid, mitigate, or compensate for any ecological impacts arising from the proposals

The scope and level of survey effort were designed to be proportionate to the scale of the development and the ecological potential of the site.

2.0 SURVEY RESULTS

2.1 PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

2.1.1 SURVEY METHOD

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of the building was undertaken to identify features with potential to support roosting bats.

The external inspection comprised a detailed visual examination of the building using binoculars where necessary. The structure was assessed for evidence of bat activity, including droppings, staining, and feeding remains, and for the presence of potential roost features (PRFs) such as:

- Gaps and crevices within the building fabric
- Lifted flashing, tiles, or weatherboarding
- Features associated with the roofline, including ridge tiles and soffits

The building was also assessed for its suitability to support nesting birds during the survey.

2.1.2 SURVEY RESULTS

Due to the lack of roof voids suitable of supporting roosting bats, an internal inspection was not deemed necessary for the current assessment. Please see Figure 2 below for an indicative photo, providing an external overview of the overall structure of the building.



Figure 2 - Photo showing gatehouse

The building was assessed as having moderate suitability for roosting bats, based on the presence of several features providing potential roosting opportunities. In particular, the cedar shingle roof covering presents areas of overlap and potential lifting, which can create narrow crevices suitable for use by crevice-dwelling bat species. Additional features of note include gaps associated with the roofline and junctions between materials, which may provide access points into sheltered voids or cavities. Whilst the structure is relatively small and lacks a substantial roof void, these features, in combination with the building's location within high-quality parkland habitat with adjacent woodland and water, increase its potential to support opportunistic or transient bat roosting.

2.2 EMERGENCE SURVEY

2.2.1 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The building was assessed as having Moderate suitability to support roosting bats during the Preliminary Roost Assessment, and therefore further survey effort was required.

Two dusk emergence surveys were undertaken in accordance with current best practice guidance outlined in Bat Conservation Trust (2023, updated 2024) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition).

The surveys were undertaken as follows:

- 21st August 2025 – surveyors: Megan Price and Lewis Badham
- 23rd September 2025 – surveyors: Megan Price and Lewis Badham

Both surveys were conducted in weather conditions suitable for bat activity, with temperatures above 10°C, low wind speeds and no precipitation.

Surveyors were positioned strategically around the building to ensure full visual coverage of all elevations and potential roost features. The surveys commenced approximately 30 minutes prior to sunset and continued for approximately 2 hours post-sunset, in line with good practice guidance.

The following equipment was used:

- Full-spectrum bat detectors: Anabat Scout
- Thermal imaging cameras: Guide TK612

Thermal imaging was used to enhance detection of bat emergence behaviour under low-light conditions, whilst acoustic detectors were used to identify bat species and activity through echolocation recordings.

2.2.2 LIMITATIONS

There were no significant limitations to the survey. Surveys were undertaken during the optimal survey season (May–September) and in suitable weather conditions. The level of survey effort is considered adequate to determine the presence or likely absence of roosting bats.

2.2.3 RESULTS

During both survey visits, no bats were observed emerging from or returning to the building.

Bat activity was recorded within the wider site, comprising commuting and foraging behaviour typical of parkland and woodland edge habitats surrounding the building. Species recorded within the vicinity included:

- Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)
- Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)
- Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*)
- Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*)
- Brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*)

No activity suggestive of roosting behaviour (e.g. repeated circling, emergence, or re-entry at specific features) was recorded in association with the building.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MITIGATION

3.1 SITE WORKS METHOD

In the absence of evidence of a bat roost, no specific mitigation measures are required for bats. However, given the building was assessed as having moderate bat roost potential, a precautionary approach is recommended to ensure compliance with wildlife legislation.

Prior to the commencement of works, the following measures should be implemented:

- A pre-commencement check of the building should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist if works are delayed beyond two years from the survey date or if the building condition changes
- All works affecting the roof, including the removal of cedar shingles and roofline features, should be undertaken using a sensitive, supervised approach, with materials removed carefully by hand where practicable

- If any evidence of bats is discovered during works (e.g. bats present, droppings, or unexpected cavities), works must cease immediately and a licensed bat ecologist contacted for further advice

Works should be undertaken during daylight hours where possible, to reduce the likelihood of disturbing any bats that may be present but undetected.

These measures will ensure that the development proceeds in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

3.2 ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT

Although no bat roost was identified within the existing structure, the building was assessed as having moderate bat roost potential, and the site is located within a high-quality parkland landscape which supports a range of bat species. As such, opportunities for ecological enhancement have been incorporated into the design in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy and to support delivery of net biodiversity benefit, in line with Planning Policy Wales (PPW12).

The proposed development includes the provision of a purpose-built bat roosting feature, in the form of a dedicated roof void space designed to provide suitable conditions for crevice-dwelling bat species. This will ensure the continued availability of roosting opportunities within the site following redevelopment.

In addition, the scheme incorporates integrated bird nesting features within the fabric of the building, providing suitable nesting opportunities for species associated with built structures and parkland environments.

Further enhancement is achieved through the provision of invertebrate habitat, contributing to ecological function and supporting a wider range of species within the site.

The location, specification, and design of these enhancement measures are shown on Figure 3: Proposed Biodiversity Strategy.

Collectively, these measures are considered to deliver an appropriate level of biodiversity enhancement in accordance with national planning policy and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.



4.0 APPLICATION OF THE MITIGATION HIERARCHY (DECCA) AND STEPWISE APPROACH

The proposed development has been assessed in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy, as set out within Planning Policy Wales (PPW12). This requires potential impacts on biodiversity to be addressed through a stepwise process of avoidance, minimisation, restoration, and compensation/enhancement (DECCA).

4.1 DECCA FRAMEWORK

AVOID

The development is located within the footprint of an existing building and associated hardstanding within a managed visitor arrival area. As such, the scheme avoids direct impacts on higher value habitats, including surrounding woodland, parkland, and water features.

MINIMISE

Potential impacts to protected species have been minimised through the integration of ecological considerations at the design stage and through the undertaking of appropriate ecological surveys. A precautionary approach to demolition and construction will be adopted to reduce the risk of disturbance to bats and nesting birds.

RESTORE

The proposal retains the established layout and function of the site within the wider landscape, ensuring continuity of use and maintaining the existing spatial relationship between built infrastructure and surrounding habitats.

COMPENSATE / ENHANCE

In accordance with PPW12, the scheme incorporates measures to deliver biodiversity enhancement, including the provision of bat roosting features, bird nesting opportunities, and invertebrate habitat (refer to Figure 3: Ecological Enhancement Plan).

4.2 STEPWISE APPROACH

In line with national planning policy, the development has followed the ecological stepwise approach:

1. Avoidance of impacts

The development avoids encroachment into ecologically sensitive habitats and is confined to an existing developed area.

2. Minimisation of impacts

Ecological surveys have informed the design, and a precautionary working method will be employed during demolition to minimise the risk of harm to protected species.

3. Mitigation of impacts

Although no bat roost was identified, appropriate working methods will be implemented during site clearance to safeguard any undetected bats.

4. Compensation and enhancement

The development incorporates ecological enhancement measures to ensure that biodiversity value is maintained and enhanced post-development.

5 REFERENCES

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