

## Bat Scoping Survey



Project: St Barrwcs Chuch, Phyllis Street, Barry

Instructed by: Newydd Housing

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## 1. Introduction

The applicant is seeking planning permission to demolish St Barrwcs Church and build a small number of apartments within the site footprint. The building is centred at ST11616699. It is currently un-used as a place of worship and is closed for use.

A data search was undertaken with SEWBReC to provide data on local bat and bird species in the area. The closest bat record to site is approximately 1.1km away and is for a pipistrelle species of bat associated with a building. The lack of bat records within the local area is thought to indicate under recording rather than a lack of bat presence.

There are a number of common bird records also provided within 1km of the development site. The closest records to site are approximately 500m away but are given to a 4 figure grid reference. Species records include house Martin, Herring Gull, Black Redstart, Swallow, great tit, house sparrow and blue tit.

### 1.1 Site Description

St Barrwcs Church is a detached brick built building located within the town of Barry Island. A small paved car park is present to the rear of the building. The building is immediately surrounded by housing in all directions with a school immediately to the north. Barry Docks are located approximately 230m to the north of site.

#### External Description

The building is brick built, a storey high, rectangular structure with a pitched cement tile roof. The building appears to have been extended on the western elevation as the roof extends down to head height and a small flat roof extension has been added to the south west. A small single storey porch is present on the north elevation. The rear (south facing) elevation of the church and single storey extension has cement render. Wooden barge and soffit boards are present on both gable ends of the building. A wooden fascia board is present at the eaves of the building.

### Internal Description

The main body of the church is a large open space with wooden boarding along the roof line and exposed timber beams. A small attic void is present above the room thought to measure around 1m in height. There is no attic space present in the flat roof extension or small brick extension on the west elevation of the building.

### 1.2 Survey Constraints

Due to the height of the attic hatch within the Church it was not possible to access the small loft space at the time of the survey. In order to access the hatch, specialist ladders would be needed.

### 1.3 Surveyor Experience

Aislinn Harris is a full member of Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Aislinn is an ecologist with 10 years experience undertaking a wide range of flora and fauna surveys. Aislinn is a licence bat worker with a current NRW survey licence (SO85699-1).

## 2. Report Constraints

Ecological surveys are limited by factors which affect the presence of plants and animals such as the time of year, migration patterns and behaviour. The survey methods employed can provide evidence for the potential presence of bat at the times when the site was visited. Although the methods follow best practice guidance and were carried out in such a way as to maximise the chances of detection, failure to detect the target species cannot be considered as definitive proof of their absence.

Even though bats are habitual creatures they can still move to new roosts if conditions are more suitable. Therefore this report cannot predict the status of the structure in regard to bat occupancy in the future. This report should be acted upon as soon as it is practical and will be valid for two year from date of issue. If planning or building works are delayed, it is the responsibility of the client to discuss and gain approval from the *author* before work commences. Natural Resources Wales will only consider bat reports that are undertaken in the preceding 2 years

## 3. Legal Constraints

Bats, and any place a bat uses for breeding or shelter, either currently occupied or unoccupied are protected by European and British law, predominantly by **The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017** which are the principal means by which the Habitats Directive is transposed from European directive into law in England and Wales.

In summary this law states that it is an offence to:

- **Deliberately capture or kill a bat**
- **Deliberately disturb a bat**
- **Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat**

- **Keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange a living or dead bat or any part of a bat**

‘Deliberately’ may also be interpreted, as not intending to injure or kill a bat but having done so due to being insufficiently informed and unaware of the consequences of the action. For a more comprehensive description and exact wording of the legislation please refer to:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/490/contents/made>

Where there is a risk that a bat roost may be present, it is incumbent upon the owner to commission a specialist bat survey to identify bat roosts before any work commences. Maximum penalties for offences relating to disturbance to bats or their roosts can amount to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or fines of up to Level 5 on the standard scale under the Criminal Justice Act 1982/1991 (i.e. £5000 in April 2001) per roost or bat disturbed or killed, or to both.

If a bat roost is discovered no work that could affect the roost can be undertaken until Natural Resources Wales (NRW), grants a licence endorsing the work. A thorough method statement and adequate mitigation proposal will need to be submitted to support any licence application.

#### **4. General Information**

Bats are unable to build roosts themselves but instead rely on both man made and naturally occurring features to provide suitable accommodation. Bats generally prefer older buildings built with traditional materials, as traditional building methods provide more opportunities for gaps and entrances to buildings. Traditional cut roofs are preferred to a roof with trusses. Bats also prefer to roost where the external roost area has access to sunlight during the day such as south facing roof elevations.

Bats can utilise the following features on a building; end tiles, barge board, soffit, gable end, porch, lead flashing hanging tiles, ridge tiles, broken tiles, eaves, sash window frame, wood cladding, fascia board, window sill, and internal roof spaces and timbers. Although this list demonstrates the most popular roosting sites it is by no means definitive. Bats can use apertures as small as 10mm in diameter to gain access.

The U.K bat population is divided into two distinct families, Rhinolophidae and Vespertilionidae. In general, Rhinolophidae (Horse Shoe) bats differ in their roosting requirement to Vespertilionidae (The remainder of UK bat species), in that Horseshoe bats prefer to roost in large areas such as internal attic spaces and hang in the open from the roof of the roost. The bats tend to roost in visible clusters to maintain the high temperatures that a maternity colony needs. Horseshoe bats also prefer free flight access and egress into the roosting area. Horseshoe bats tend to be more light averting to other UK bat species, and routinely fly around the internal roosting area to warm up before exiting. It is noted that Plecotus (Long Eared) bats share some of these preferences. Vesper bats are on the whole are crevice dwelling bats who squeeze into small apertures to access the roost. These like Horseshoe bats will cluster in maternity colonies, but are normally hidden from view. Vesper bats with the exception of Long Eared bats do not require a large internal roost to fly around before exit. Long Eared bats although part of the vesper family are very light averting and will on occasions share the roosting patterns of both Horseshoe and crevice dwelling species.

## **5. External Scoping Survey**

A scoping survey was undertaken on the 1st June 2020 in conditions of good natural light, the majority of external aspects of the buildings were comprehensively evaluated for roost potential. Evidence was also sought for any staining or droppings, which could suggest bat occupation. Binoculars were used when required.

The building was inspected for overt evidence of bat presence and occupation such as:

- Staining around entry or roosting point caused by oils secreted by the bat into its fur

- Scratching on surfaces caused by the bat in the act of take off and landing
- Bat droppings on walls, floors, roof voids, window cills or panes and barge boards
- Urine stains below a possible entrance site, within entrance to a cavity or on timbers used for roosting
- Bats can produce chatter on warm evenings prior to leaving the roost. A heterodyne bat detector is used to help determine this
- Flies around entrance or on the floor of possible roosts, which may be attracted to bat guano.

**The building appears to be in very good condition with hardly any gaps or cracks visible. The roof tiles and ridge tiles are all intact and appear to be tightly fitted with no obvious gaps or cracks. The soffit and fascia boards are all tightly fitted, again with no gaps or cracks visible. The purlins are visible on both gable ends of the building. The cement render on the south facing elevation is tightly fitted around the purlins. However on the northern elevation very small gaps are present between the purlin and wall.**

**Photos of the building are shown in Appendix 1. A pair of house sparrow were seen nesting in one of the small gaps between the purlin and wall on the northern elevation of the building.**

## **6. Internal Scoping Survey**

An internal inspection of the building within the proposed development site footprint was undertaken on the 1st June 2020. No bat droppings or evidence of bat presence was noted within or around the building. A single attic space is present beneath the ridge line of the Church approximately 6m high from the floor. The surveyor could not access the attic space during the site visit. No other attic spaces are present within the building.



## **7. Summary of Survey Findings**

### **Bats**

No evidence of the presence of bats was noted during the scoping survey completed at St Barrwcs Church. Very limited potential access points suitable for bats were noted within the building. A small number of gaps were noted around exposed purlins on the north facing elevation of the building. One of the gaps was in use by nesting house sparrow. The roof and all other areas of the building appeared in extremely good condition with no gaps or cracks visible.

Whilst this gaps on the north elevation could have some potential for use there is a lamp post directly outside the building. The Church is also located in an urban environment with street lighting and roads immediately around it and very few trees or vegetated corridors in close proximity.

Given the lack of evidence of the presence of bats found in and around the building and limited potential access points into the building it is considered highly unlikely roosting bats are present. However it is difficult to completely rule out the presence of bats in a structure, even when activity surveys have been completed! It is also noted that the scoping survey was constrained by a lack of internal access to the attic. It is not proposed to complete activity surveys on the building instead a precautionary approach to demolition works will be adopted.

### **Birds**

A pair of nesting house sparrow were noted using the building during the site visit. The building is used by nesting birds and mitigation measures for the building demolition and compensation for the loss of a nesting site will be required.

## **8. Concluding Remarks and Recommendations**

**No evidence of the presence of bats was found during the scoping survey completed at site. The building is considered to have negligible potential for use by bats. However the potential for bats to be present cannot be entirely ruled out, although it is considered to be very low in this instance. The building is confirmed to be used by nesting birds and as such consideration to such species must be given as part of the works at site.**

It is recommended that the soffit and barge boards and tiles along the northern elevation of the building are removed by hand and visually inspected for the presence of bats. If bats are found all works will cease and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) will be contacted for advice on how to proceed. This advice may be that works stop until a development licence is sought from NRW.

The building must be demolished outside of the bird nesting season of March to August inclusive. If this is not achievable an ecologist must inspect the building for active birds' nests prior to demolition works beginning. If an active nest is identified a buffer zone of 5m around the nest must be observed until the chicks have fledged.

As compensation for the loss of nesting habitat any new buildings within the site will need to include provision for nesting birds. At least two wood stone sparrow terrace boxes will be provided within the new development. The location of the bird boxes will need to be agreed with an ecologist to make sure it is suitable.

The Environment Act (Wales) 2016 places a duty on competent authorities such as the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority to conserve and enhance biodiversity. In order to enhance the biodiversity of the proposed development site it is recommended that:

- 2 x 1FR Schwegler bat boxes are built into the rear (east) facing wall of the new extension. The boxes will be built into the walls of the building at eaves level. Photographs of the installed boxes will be supplied to the planning authority.

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- Any new planting within the site boundary must use native species. At present, the entire site footprint is covered by the building and car parking area. The provision of any soft landscaping within the site boundary would increase the biodiversity of the site.
- If any new fencing is required as part of the development works the fencing will be hedgehog friendly in design. A friendly design is considered to allow the passage of small animals across the site. It should provide either a continuous gap between the bottom of the fence and ground of approximately 13cm or gaps cut a set distance along fencing.

**Appendix 1 – Site Photographs**



Rear (south) elevation



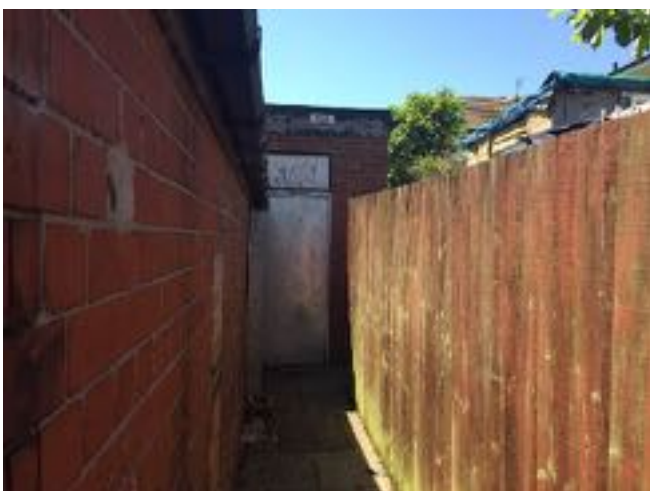
Side (east) elevation



Front ( north) elevation



Side (west) elevation



View of small flat roof extension



Internal view of Church

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Internal view of roof



internal view of flat roof area

**Appendix 2 - Site Location**

