



Environmental Consultants

Bat Survey Report

Renovation of Somers House

at Burkes Lane, Athenry, Co. Galway



DOCUMENT DETAILS

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Document Title: Bat Survey Report

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Abstract: The following report details the results of a preliminary bat survey undertaken for the renovation works of a building within the town of Athenry. This bat report is required to assess the impacts of the proposed development on bat species within and surrounding the proposed site.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This report details the findings of a bat survey completed as part of a planning application for the renovation works of a building in Athenry, Co. Galway.

This report aims to;

- Identify bat species using the building.
- Examine building for roosting potential.
- Potential impacts of bats by the proposed development.

The surveys undertaken are in line with recommendations in Chapter 10 of the Bat Conservation Trust 'Good Practice Guidelines, 2nd edition, 2012' (BCT Guidelines 2012) and The Irish Wildlife Manual No. 134' (Marnell, F., Kelleher, C. & Mullen, E. 2022). The survey was designed and carried out by John Curtin B.Sc. (Env.). John has been carrying out bat surveys since 2012. John has also completed the Bat Conservation Ireland, Bat Detector Workshop and Bat Handling Workshop which are the standard training for the carrying out of bat surveys in Ireland. He follows the Bat Conservation Ireland 'Good Practice Guidelines' (Aughney *et al.*, 2008). In addition, John is an active member of Bat Conservation Ireland, which monitor bat populations in Ireland, and facilitate the education of bat communities to the public.

John holds the following licences.

Description	Licence No
Licence to capture protected wild animals for educational, scientific or other purposes (bats)	C12/2023
Roost disturbance (bats)	Der/Bat 2023-07
Licence to photograph / film wild animals (bats)	23/2023

The site in question is in the town centre of Athenry, Co. Galway, located adjacent to an old church and graveyard. The site refers to the existing building only and the purpose of the bat survey was to establish if bats are roosting within the building.

2 DESKTOP STUDY

2.1 BATS IN IRELAND – LEGISLATIVE PROTECTION

There are two main pieces of legislation which cover wildlife protection in Ireland – the Wildlife Act and the Habitats Regulations. These are outlined below, with particular reference to the protection afforded to bat species in Ireland.

The Wildlife Acts 1976 and 2000

The primary pieces of national legislation for the protection of wildlife in Ireland are the Wildlife Act (1976) and the Wildlife [Amendment] Act (2000). All species of bats in Ireland are listed on Schedule 5 of the 1976 Act, and are therefore subject to the provisions of Section 23, which make it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take a bat
- Possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a bat
- Willfully interfere with any structure or place used for breeding or resting by a bat
- Willfully interfere with a bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose

The Habitats Regulations 1997-2005

The EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive 1992) seeks to protect rare and vulnerable species and the habitats in which they are commonly found and requires that appropriate monitoring of populations be undertaken. All bat species found in Ireland are listed under Annex IV of the Directive, while the lesser horseshoe bat is afforded further protection under Annex II. The Habitats Directive has been transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997. All bat species are listed on the First Schedule and Section 23 of the regulations makes it 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

Provision is made in the Regulations for the Environment Minister to grant, in strictly specified circumstances set out in that Regulation, a derogation license permitting any of the above activities “where there is no satisfactory alternative and the derogation is not detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species to which the Habitats Directive relates at a favourable conservation status in their natural range”.

2.2 SITE LOCATION

The proposed site lies in the town of Athenry, Co Galway (Grid Ref. N550226 / E727935). The site for the proposed development lies approximately 7km from the Lough Corrib SAC (site code: 000297) a site which has been designated due to the presence of the Annex II species; Lesser Horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) and is the closest designated areas for this species to the subject site. (see Figure 2-1 below).

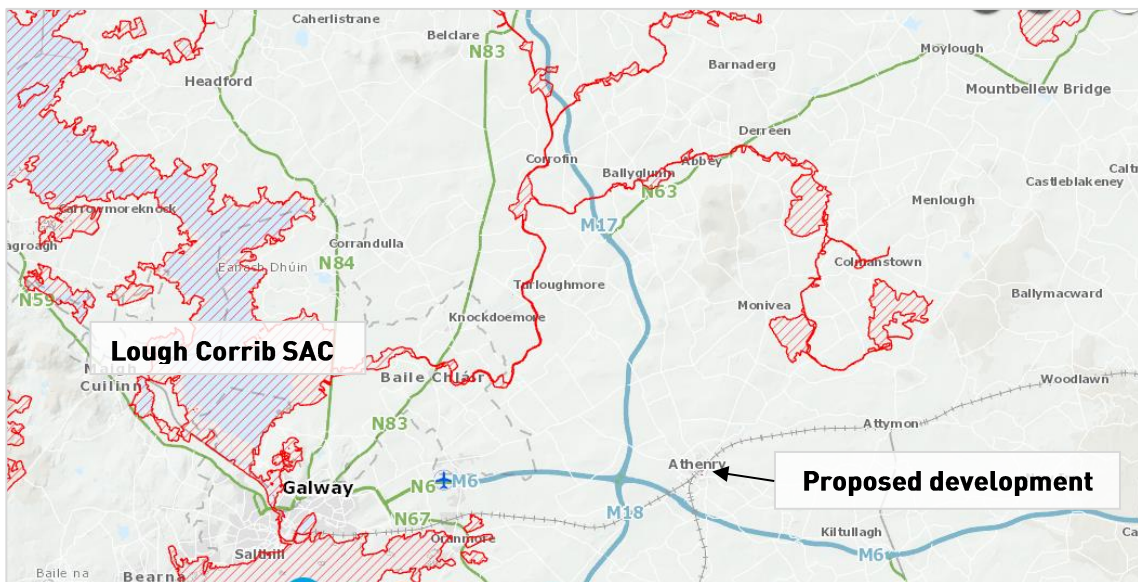


Figure 2-1: Location of proposed development in relation to designated site



Figure 2-2: Aerial displaying urban setting of building with former church grounds located to north

2.3 BAT SPECIES RECORDED IN THE SURROUNDING AREA

The NBDC database was consulted for details on bat records held for the site and the surroundings. The database was consulted on the 20/02/2023 for details on historical records from the site, the surrounding 2km (M52D) and the 10km hectad; M52. Results are outlined in Table 2-1. One of the nine confirmed resident bat species known to occur in Ireland have been recorded within the 2km (M52D) square the subject site resides in and four of the nine species are found within the 10km square (M52) much of these sightings recorded during BC Ireland Car Based Bat Monitoring Scheme, BATLAS 2010 and EIS surveys.

Table 2-1: Irish bat species recorded within 10km

Type of Record	Species	Distance from site	Date of last record	Details	Potential connectivity with subject site (for roost records)
Individual sightings and roost	Daubenton's Bat (Myotis daubentonii)	Vague 100m records at various locations N, E, S, SW & NW, approx. 5-10km from site	2011	Bat recorded from detector survey	No connectivity to subject site, bridge roost found other side of M6 motorway to subject site.
Individual sightings and roost	Natterer's Bat (Myotis nattereri)	Vague 100m record 6km to the SW	2006	Bats recording during survey, also roost recorded at disclosed location	No connectivity to subject site, roost found other side of M6 motorway to subject site.
Individual sightings	Pipistrelle (Pipistrellus pipistrellus sensu lato)	Vague 100m record 2.2km to the SW.	2008	Bat recorded from detector survey	Individual sightings
Individual sightings	Soprano Pipistrelle (Pipistrellus pygmaeus)	Vague 100m record 2.2km to the SW & SE	2009	Recorded during EIS Surveys	Individual sightings

2.3.1 Lesser Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

The Lesser Horseshoe Bat (LSH: Wildlife Manuals No. 85 (2015) shows the subject site lies to the east of the Galway city (Menlo castle) winter site for a small number of the species. Lough Corrib SAC is located approximately 7km from the subject site, which is the closest designated site for Lesser Horseshoe bats. The South Galway LSH range commences 13km to the SW by Lough Fingal Complex SAC.

The Lough Corrib SAC (000297) Conservation Objective documents were examined as part of the desktop review. The subject site lies does not lie within a Core Sustainance Zone (CSZ).

3 SURVEY FINDINGS

An inspection of Somers House at Burkes Lane, Athenry, was conducted on the 1st February 2023. The survey was conducted with the aid of a ladder, high powered torch and endoscope.

A thorough search of all areas of the building was conducted. Evidence of bat usage sought during the surveys include:

- Bat droppings (these will accumulate under an established roost or under access points);
- Insect remains (under feeding perches);
- Oil (from fur) and urine stains;
- Scratch marks; and
- Bat corpses.

3.1.1 Description of site (external)

The site in question consists of an existing building situated within the town of Athenry. The site is located to a former church and graveyard now used as a heritage building. This neighbouring site has potential for roosting and feeding bats although several lamp-posts were noted which if turned on frequently would lower the potential for bat usage (plate 3-1).

The subject two-storey building is in good condition, both externally and internally. Externally the building has a plaster render and slated roof with minimal potential access points suitable for bats. A flat roof section to the rear is partially within the site boundary. The roof of this section consists of bitumen. A portion outside the boundary of the building has a skylight type split in the bitumen that could provide access (plate 3-3). This was not examined as it lay outside the boundary of the site. A single external cavity was recorded under a bitumen lip to the rear of the building (plate 3-8). No sign of bats was found here.

3.1.2 Description of site (internal)

All rooms were examined for evidence of bats. Soft furnishings such as curtains were examined as wintering bats can hibernate in them. No evidence of bats were found. Upstairs consists of multiple rooms, each with double glazed windows. Windows were checked for access points, no evidence of bats or droppings found (plate 3-2).

The attic was also examined. The roof is in good condition and was previously renovated (plate 3-4). No gaps found along main section and it is lined with breather membrane. Both gable walls were examined. The southern wall consists of stone (plate 3-6). Some gaps can be found towards the adjoining attic space (internal wall) however the wall was completely covered in cobwebs with no bat droppings. The North-east wall (brick) was similarly covered in cobwebs

with no cavities present (plate 3-7). There was also an accumulation of cobwebs along the top edge of ridge beam (plate 3-5). This is the area most likely to host void dwelling bats such as Brown Long-eared. The accumulations of cobwebs here is a negative indicator for these types of bats.

In the downstairs flat roofed extension, a ducting pipe has been removed providing potential access externally, thorough an insulation filled cavity wall. This was examined however no evidence of bats was found (plate 3-9 to 3-11).

Overall, there is minimal access potential for bats in this building and no evidence of previous bat occupancy.

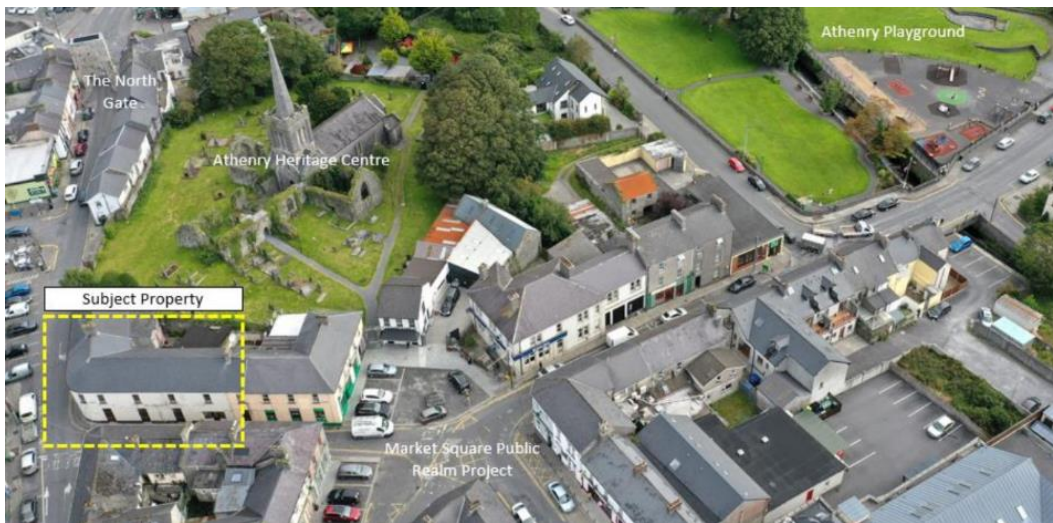


Plate 3-1: Aerial view of building



Plate 3-2 Upstairs in building



Plate 3-3 Bitumen felt roof with potential access



Plate 3-4 Attic space



Plate 3-5 Accumulation of cobwebs in attic space



Plate 3-6 Southern gable wall

Plate 3-7 NE gable wall



Plate 3-8 view under bitumen



Plate 3-9 Inside cavity wall



Plate 3-10 large opening to rear of building



Plate 3-11 Inside wall cavity

4 DISCUSSION

No evidence of bats using the building were found during the daylight building assessment. A thorough search was conducted throughout the building and no signs of bats was found. An accumulation of cobwebs in the attic space is a good indication that no flying species use the space. No signs of bat droppings, or staining were found.

The building is in good condition with few potential access points. The roof appears to have been renovated in recent years and the windows are modern double-glazed units. The building is fairly intact from the outside. Several possible access points were identified such as a cavity in the bitumen felt and a hole in the back wall where a vent is missing. However, on inspection with the endoscope, no evidence of bat occupancy was recorded.

The surrounding area directly to the north, within the old church grounds, has potential for bat species

5 POTENTIAL IMPACTS

The survey above provides a study of bat usage within a building in the town of Athenry, Co. Galway. The building was assessed for its potential access points for bats and any evidence of bat roosts. The building was found not to be used by bats. No bats will be affected by this renovation project.

6 MITIGATION AND COMPENSATION

No mitigation measures required as no bats will be affected by this project.

7 CONCLUSION

This report details the findings of a daylight bat survey completed as part of a planning application for the renovation works of a building in Athenry, Co. Galway.

The proposed development will have minimal impacts on bats in the area. The development is contained within the footprint of the existing building and bats are not using the building at present. It is the surveyor's opinion that there will be no effect on the local bat population arising from the proposed development.