Eire Ecology

Environmental Consultants

Bat and Swift

Preliminary Inspection Report

Tuam Train station,

Co. Galway.

DOCUMENT DETAILS

Client:	Galway County Council
Project Title:	Redevelopment of Tuam train station building
Document Title:	Bat and Swift Preliminary Survey Report
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document reports on the findings of a preliminary bat and swift survey conducted on the 5th of February 2025, in Tuam, Co. Galway at the former train station building located off Sean Purcell Road. Surveys were commissioned to examine potential impacts on bats and swifts by proposed upgrade works on the derelict building.

Preliminary surveys included bat roost and swift nesting site assessment of structures. Results show the presence of a probable Brown Long-eared bat roost to the south of the building within an attic. The initial assessment of the building as a potential swift roost shows a moderate potential for this species. Swifts typically nest in crevices in eves of buildings above approx. 5m. Much of this buildings walls are lower than this however there are numerous suitable holes in the eves that cannot be ruled out. In addition, to the south of the building, a stone and metal tower box was not accessible and could have potential.

A summertime assessment for both bats and swifts is recommended prior to construction. Any changes to the bat roost location will first require a derogation licence from the NPWS.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This report details the findings of a preliminary survey carried out to evaluate the potential impacts the proposed works will have on local bats and swifts. In the case where negative impacts on these populations are identified, mitigation measures will be implemented to alleviate these impacts.

This report aims to;

- Examine the area of works for the presence of bats and assess the potential of the building to host swifts.

Bat surveys undertaken are in line with recommendations of the Bat Conservation Trust 'Good Practice Guidelines, 4th edition, (Collins, 2023) and The Irish Wildlife Manual No. 134' (Marnell, 2022). The survey was designed and carried out by John Curtin B.Sc. (Env.). John has over ten years' experience of carrying out bat surveys and has completed copious surveys during this time. 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 a longtime active member of Bat Conservation Ireland, which monitor bat populations in Ireland, and facilitate the education of bat communities to the public.

The swift preliminary inspection took guidance from methodologies outlined in the Tipperary Swift survey 2018 (Birdwatch, 2018). John has been conducting bird surveys since 2013.

The closest historical bat roost is located approx. 500m from the site where Natterers bats were recorded in 2011. The closest swift record was a sighting recorded in August 2024 some 250m to the north-east.

2 DESKTOP STUDY

2.1 LEGISLATION & PLANNING POLICY

2.1.1 EU Habitats Directive

The "Habitats Directive" (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna) is the main legislative instrument for the protection and conservation of biodiversity within the European Union and lists certain habitats and species that must be protected within wildlife conservation areas, considered to be important at a European as well as at a national level. A "Special Conservation Area" or SAC is a designation under the Habitats Directive. The Habitats Directive sets out the protocol for the protection and management of SACs. The Directive sets out key elements of the system of protection including the requirement for "Appropriate Assessment" of plans and projects. The requirements for an Appropriate Assessment are set out in the EU Habitats Directive. Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Directive.

2.1.2 EU Birds Directive

The "Birds Directive" (Council Directive 79/409/EEC as codified by 2009/147/EC) provides for a network of sites in all member states to protect birds at their breeding, feeding, roosting and wintering areas. This directive identifies species that are rare, in danger of extinction or vulnerable to changes in habitat and which need protection (Annex I species). Appendix I indicates Annex I bird species as listed on the Birds Directive. A "Special Protection Area" or SPA, is a designation under The Birds Directive.

SACs and SPAs form a pan-European network of protected sites known as Natura 2000 sites and any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site requires Appropriate Assessment (AA). As outlined previously, an AA Screening Report was prepared for this project and is presented as a separate report to the planning application.

2.1.3 Wildlife Acts 1976 – 2012

The primary domestic legislation providing for the protection of wildlife in general, and the control of some activities adversely impacting upon wildlife is the Wildlife Act of 1976, as amended. The aims of the wildlife act according to the National Parks and Wildlife Service are "... to provide for the protection and conservation of wild fauna and flora, to conserve a representative sample of important ecosystems, to provide for the development and protection of game resources and to regulate their exploitation, and to provide the services necessary to accomplish such aims." All bird species are protected under the act. The Wildlife (Amendment) Act of 2000 amended the original Act to improve the effectiveness of the Act to achieve its aims.

2.2 Site Location

The site is located in Tuam by the junction between Church View and Sean Purcell Road, (53.51160, -8.85353). While the site is situated in an urban environment, the rear of the site is situated by the old railway providing a potential ecological corridor with connectivity to the wider landscape, particularly the Clare River 2km to the north, a component of the Lough Corrib SAC (Site Code: 000297). While this SAC is designated for Lesser Horseshoe bats, the designated roost lies over 28km away thus outside the zoner of influence for this roost. (see **Figure 2-1** below).

2.1 Bat & Swift Recorded in the Surrounding Area

The BCI & NBDC databases were consulted for details on records held for the site and the surroundings. The database was consulted on 26/02/2025. Species recorded roosting within a 6km radius of the site include Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*), Lesser Horseshoe, and Daubenton's bat. In addition; Leisler's bat, Common an Soprano Pipistrelle have been identified from ad hoc and transect surveys.

A single Swift record has been recorded from the town since 2010. Previously, the Bird Atlas 2007-2011, 1998-1991, 1988-1991 and 1968-1972 had confirmed breeding in the town.

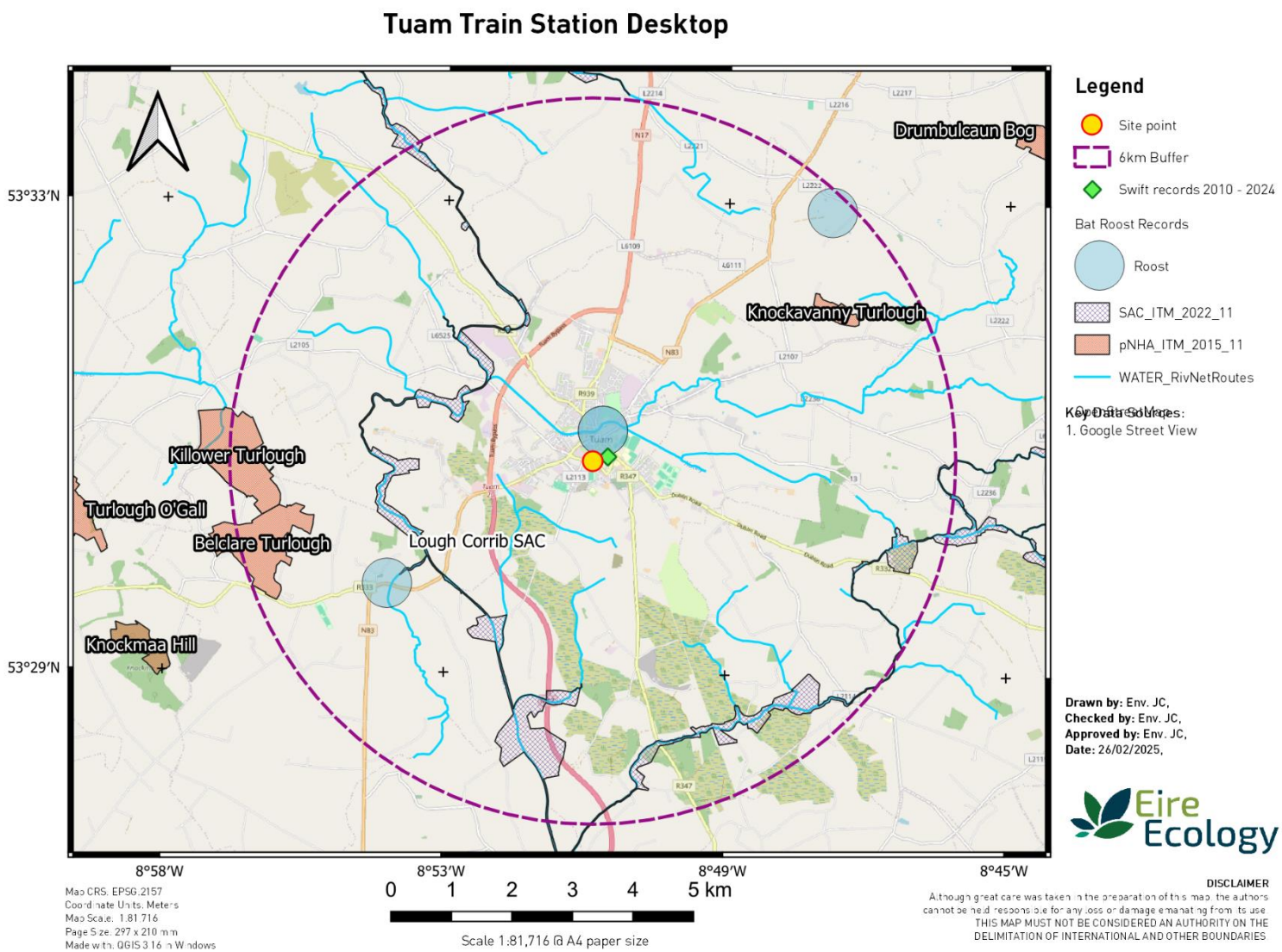

Figure 2-1: Location of proposed development to designated sites

3 SURVEY FINDINGS

3.1 SURVEY METHODOLOGIES

3.1.1 Habitats on site

The subject site refers to a single plot approx. 300m north of the river Lee. The areas and land surrounding the site are a mixture of Improved Grassland, Scrub and Woodland, including a plot of conifer to the Northwest. In many areas of the North and South bank of the River Lee have tree lines and woodland, which are attractive commuting routes for bats. An abundance of suitable river habitats in the region are ideal foraging habitat for Daubenton's bats. This site 12.7km downstream from the closest record of a Daubenton's roost.

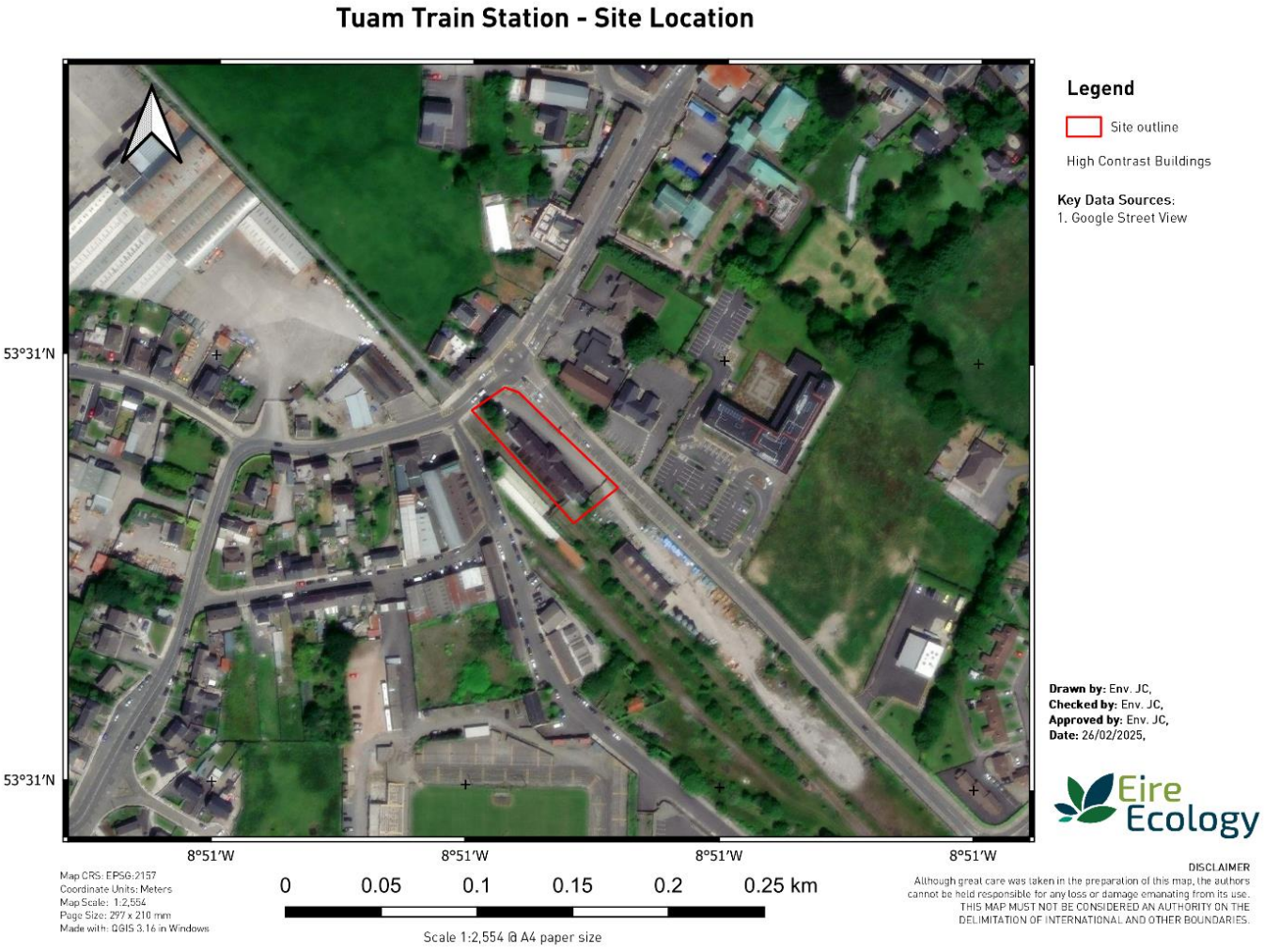

Figure 3-1: Aerial view displaying site location.

3.1.2 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)

The proposed development involves renovating and restoring the derelict structures on site. The site consists of a long (c.60m), single storey building with lower extensions to either side which are likely to be demolished. The building consists of plastered block walls and a slatted roof. Timber fascia can be found blocking the wall plate, however numerous rot holes provide potential access points for both bat and swift species. Some netting has been placed over the roof to prevent slates from falling on passersby's however the mesh size is large enough for both swifts and bats to enter the building.

Windows have all been blocked by plywood creating dark spaces within. A small water tower can be found to the south east of the building.

Street lighting along both roads lower bat roosting potential however the rear of the site faces the old railway line which provides a potential dark corridor for bats particularly heading south.

Plate 3-1: Front view of building

Plate 3-2: Rear view of buildings roof including multiple holes providing potential access

Plate 3-3: Rear view of building with train track.

Plate 3-4: Netting covering fascia and roof.

Plate 3-5: Rear gable with multiple potential access points

Plate 3-6 & Plate 3-7: Old water tower

3.1.2.1 Internal results

The main building was examined on the inside using ladder, torch and inspection camera. The building contains multiple rooms that were all dark. Soft furnishings such as curtains (occasionally used by hibernating bats) were all examined as were suitable gaps between shutters and walls (see plates 3-8 to 3-10). In addition, a section of floor in a northern room had degraded to such a point that a basement type cavity underneath the floor was available to search. No evidence of bat occupancy was found during these searches.

Plate 3-8: Internal view showing soft furnishings

Plate 3-9 rear hallway with shutters.

Plate 3-10: 1m cavity under floor in northern room

The attic spaces of the two side extensions were available to search. Both had a layer of bitumen felt thus increasing potential for roosting bats. While no evidence of bats was found in the northern extension several droppings from a suspected Brown Long-eared bat was found in the southern attic space. These scattered droppings suggest a low number of bats, potentially a satellite roost for the species.

Plate 3-11: Southern attic space

Plate 3-12: Suspected Brown Long-eared bat droppings

4 Discussion and Recommendations

The survey revealed that the site is used as a bat roost. Small accumulations of suspected Brown Long-eared bat droppings were noted from the southern extension attic. This location is the most suitable for bats as it has access to the southern railway which should be dark at night.

In relation to swifts, although the many cavities in the fascia are not particularly high, usage by this species cannot be ruled out at this stage.

We recommend conducting summertime swift and bat surveys in order to obtain further evidence of the extent of the bat roost and to assess if swifts are utilising the site.