



# Ecological Appraisal & Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Proposed Construction of a New McDonald's Drive Thru Restaurant at

Ashgrove Road West, Aberdeen

12<sup>th</sup> April 2022

ENVIRONMENTAL AND  
SUSTAINABILITY CONSULTANTS

## Document Control

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## Executive Summary

This ecological appraisal report details the potential ecological effects of the proposed construction of a new drive-through restaurant at Ashgrove Road West, Aberdeen.

The site currently comprises a day centre building with landscaped grounds containing amenity grassland, scattered trees and ornamental garden areas. The habitats present on the site are not considered to be of ecological value, however some of the native species trees are of local ecological value. The site is unlikely to support protected or notable species, although the presence of bats cannot be conclusively ruled out and the building and vegetation on site could be used by nesting birds.

A survey is required to fully determine the presence or likely absence of bats on the site.

The loss of existing habitats would not have a significant ecological impact. However, mitigation is required to prevent disturbance of nesting birds and additional mitigation would be required if bats are found to be present. A wildlife-friendly lighting scheme is recommended.

The development presents opportunities for ecological enhancements including planting to benefit pollinators and planting fruiting trees to benefit bird species.

Provided all of the recommended mitigation measures and some of the recommended ecological enhancement measures are implemented, the development would comply with relevant nature conservation legislation and planning policy regarding the protection of biodiversity and the provision of ecological enhancements.

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 *Background*

This document details the ecological effects of the proposed construction of proposed new drive-through restaurant at Ashgrove Road West, Aberdeen. (see Figure 1.1 for the site location), which is currently under construction. In March 2022, Encon Associates were instructed by McDonald's to undertake an ecological survey of the site in order to provide information regarding the ecology of the site and inform plans for its development. As the site currently contains a building, a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment was also carried out.

### 1.2 *Brief Description of the Proposed Works*

The proposals entail clearance of the site including the demolition of the existing buildings, followed by the construction of a new McDonald's drive-through restaurant, with associated car parking, access and landscaping.

### 1.3 *Scope*

This document aims to assess the likely ecological effects of the proposed development.

The scope of this Ecological Assessment is to:

- Identify any potential biophysical changes as a result of the proposed development.
- Identify and provide a valuation of features of ecological interest on a site (such as habitats and protected species) and recommend further surveys should they be necessary.
- Assess the likely ecological effects of the development against relevant legislation and policy.
- Assess the potential of the existing buildings to be used by roosting bats.

- Recommend avoidance and/or mitigation measures that are likely to be required to reduce the ecological impact of the proposals.

If no further surveys are recommended, this report can serve as full assessment of the ecological effects of the development in support of any planning application.

## 1.4 *Legislation and Policy Context*

### 1.4.1 *Relevant Legislation*

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (1) is the primary piece of legislation by which biodiversity in the UK is protected. The most relevant areas of the Act to development related activities are:

- The identification and subsequent protection of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), which prohibits damaging activities
- The protection of certain species listed in Schedule 5, which prohibits killing, injury, disturbance, damage and/or destruction of breeding sites and/or resting places and sale (it should be noted that all parts of this protection do not apply to all Scheduled species)
- The protection of wild birds and their nests, which prohibits damage or destruction of nests whilst in use. Species listed in Schedule 1 of the act receive additional protection from disturbance whilst they are building a nest or are near a nest containing eggs or young. It also prohibits the disturbance of dependent young.
- Measures to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (known as the ‘Habitats Regulations’) (2), pass two EEC Directives into UK law. The Regulations protect sites and

species deemed to be of conservation importance across Europe. The most relevant parts of the Regulations to development related activities are:

- The protection of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- The protection of species listed within Schedule 2 of the Regulations, which prohibits killing, injury, disturbance, damage and/or destruction of breeding sites and/or resting places and sale, this confers some level of habitat protection.

In order for activities that would be likely to result in a breach of species protection under the regulations to legally take place, a European Protected Species (EPS) licence must first be obtained from NatureScot.

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (3), deals solely with the protection of badgers *Meles meles* in the UK. It prohibits killing, injuring or taking badgers, damaging, destroying or otherwise interfering with a badger sett, disturbing an occupied badger sett and sale of badgers.

Within Scotland, the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 (4) amends several pieces of wildlife legislation, including the Wildlife & Countryside Act. However, most of the amendments are of limited relevance to development activities.

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (5) requires that public bodies to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity. This means that Planning Authorities must consider biodiversity when reaching planning decisions.

#### 1.4.2 *Planning Policy*

Government policy with respect to the protection of biodiversity is laid out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (6). This places an onus on development to minimise impacts to biodiversity and where possible to provide net biodiversity gain. The NPPF provides guidance to Local Authorities in how to conserve and enhance biodiversity through local Planning Policies and when assessing planning applications.

Local planning policy is contained within the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (7), which contains policies directly relevant to the protection of ecology and biodiversity. Relevant policies to this development include:

- NE1: *Greenspace Network* seeks to protect and enhance the Greenspace Network for a variety of reasons, including for wildlife
- NE5: *Tree and Woodlands* protects tree and woodlands
- NE8: *Natural Heritage* protects designated sites, legally protected species, species identified within the local Biodiversity Action Plan and carbon-rich soils (i.e., peatlands).

The full text of the policies is contained within Appendix 1.

#### 1.4.4 *Other nature conservation policy*

Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) are the UK's response to the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity. The UKBAP described the biodiversity of the UK and contains Action Plans for the most threatened habitats and species. It is implemented at a local level through regional and local BAPs. The *UK Post 2010 Biodiversity Framework* has now superseded the UKBAP (implemented in Scotland via the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (8), and through Local Biodiversity Partnerships a more local level). Within Aberdeen, biodiversity duty is

implemented by North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership, which has identified priority habitats and species in the local area (9). Aberdeen City Council has also published a Biodiversity Strategy which aims to preserve biodiversity within the City (10).

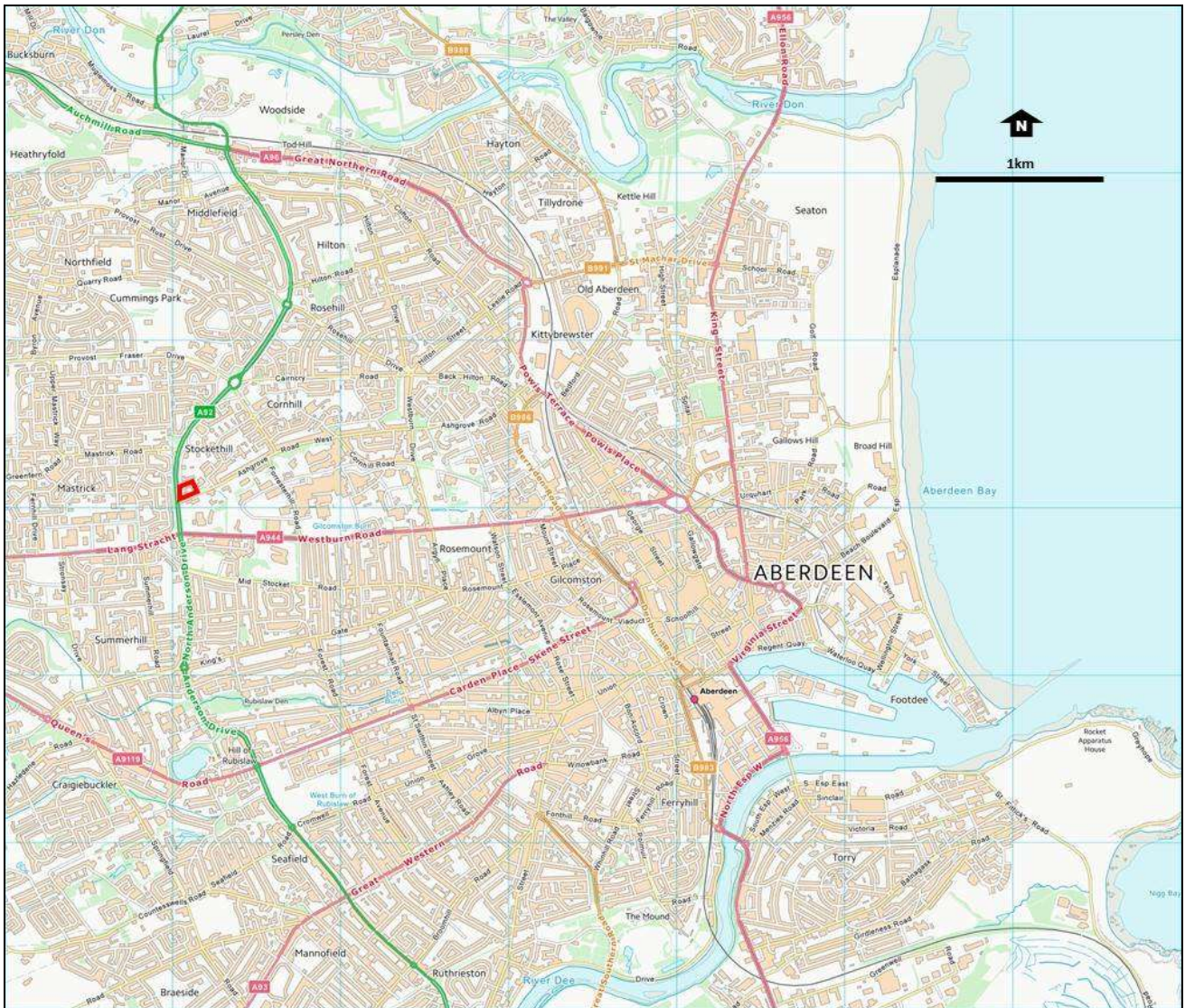


Figure 1.1: Site location. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022.



## 2.0 Methodology

### 2.1 *Desk Study Methodology*

Available online resources such as the MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside) and NBN (National Biodiversity Network) websites were interrogated for relevant information, including statutory designated sites within 5km of the site. A search of information on protected sites and species within 1km of the site was requested from the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC), which holds records for Aberdeen.

### 2.2 *Field Survey Methodology*

#### 2.2.1 *Ecological Appraisal*

The Ecological Appraisal survey was carried out by Dr Racheal Thwaites MCIEEM for and on behalf of Encon Associates Ltd on 25 March 2022. The survey followed CIEEM's Preliminary Ecological Appraisal guidance (11). The survey consisted of a site walkover (loosely based on the "Phase 1" methodology (12), modified to suit the situation) with all accessible areas of the site and adjacent land (where relevant) covered. The habitats present were generally described, with attention paid to their potential to support protected species. A general search for evidence of protected species was also undertaken.

#### 2.2.2 *Bat Preliminary Roost Assessment*

The bat Preliminary Roost Assessment was carried out by Dr Racheal Thwaites MCIEEM for and on behalf of Encon Associates Ltd on 25 March 2022, following best practice methodology (13). All areas of each building were internally and externally examined for evidence of bats. The building survey included an internal and external assessment using a powerful torch and an endoscope. The internal rooms were fully assessed using a powerful

torch beam to scan the walls and flat surfaces for droppings and other signs of bat activity. Feeding remains such as moth and butterfly wing concentrations were also recorded.

Externally, visual ground inspections of all elevations were undertaken using binoculars. Photographs were taken to capture likely features of ecological value to bats and birds i.e. missing tiles, damaged or missing mortar, exposed gable ends, gaps within soffit board, rotten timber and other potential entry points. Other external aspects of the buildings were surveyed, including windows, windowsills, external doors and the ground within close proximity of the structure was thoroughly inspected for bat droppings and feeding remains.

Each building was categorised as either high, medium, low or negligible potential for roosting bats in accordance with the criteria in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1.** *Criteria for the categorisation of bat roost potential.*

Suitability	Description of building, tree or structure
Negligible	No habitat features on likely to be used by roosting bats
Low	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, potential roost sites not suitable for larger numbers or regular use (i.e. maternity or hibernation).
Moderate	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats, but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
High	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time.
Confirmed roost	Evidence of bats or use by bats found.

## 2.3 *Assessment Methodology*

### 2.3.1 *Introduction*

The methodology for the assessment of the likely ecological effects of the proposed development is based on the principles of CIEEM's *Guidelines for Ecological Assessment in the UK, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (14). Although this assessment does not constitute a formal Ecological/Environmental Impact Assessment, the CIEEM guidelines provide a useful framework for assessing ecological impacts at any level.

### 2.3.2 *Valuation*

Features of ecological interest are valued on a geographic scale. Value is assigned on the basis of legal protection, national and local biodiversity policy and cultural and/or social significance.

### 2.3.3 *Identification of Potential Ecological Impacts in Absence of Mitigation*

A development may have ecological effects beyond its site boundaries, therefore the CIEEM guidelines require that the 'zone of influence' be identified. Due to the relatively small size of this development, for the majority of ecological features, the zone of influence is considered unlikely to extend beyond the footprint of the works and immediately adjacent habitat.

Without mitigation, the proposed development may result in the following biophysical changes during construction and/or operation:

- Loss of and damage to habitats within or adjacent to the footprint of the development and construction zone.
- Any loss or damage of habitats could result in death and/or injury to protected species should they be present.

- Disturbance of immediately adjacent habitats and any wildlife using them during construction.

#### 2.4 *Limitations*

This survey comprised a single walkover. As such it is only possible to gain a snapshot of the ecology of the site and it is possible that some seasonal species could be missed, particularly given the timing of the survey. However, given the habitat types present on the site it is considered highly unlikely that any species or features of ecological significance would be missed.

The ecology of a site can change quickly over time. Therefore, this survey is considered valid for two years from the date of the report.

## 3.0 Ecological Baseline

### 3.1 *Site Context*

The proposed development site lies within the west of the city of Aberdeen, approximately 3.2km west of the city centre, at the junction of Ashgrove Road West (A9011) and North Anderson Road (A92) (see figure 1.1 for the site location). The surrounding area is urban, and is surrounded primarily by residential development and commercial, retail and service premises. The site itself contains a former day centre, which at the time of the survey was being used as a Covid-19 testing centre.

### 3.2 *Protected Sites*

There are no statutory designated sites within the search area. The nearest Statutory site is the River Dee SAC, which is approximately 3.5km southeast and this is considered to be outside of the zone of influence of the development.

There are no locally designated sites within 1km of the proposed development site.

### 3.3 *Description of Habitats Within the Zone of Influence*

#### 3.3.1 *Habitats*

A survey map of the site with target notes is provided at Figure 3.1.

The site comprises a former day centre situated within landscaped grounds. The day centre building (target note 1, photos 1 and 2) lies at the centre of the site and there is a network of asphalt or paved paths, roads and car-parking providing access to the site. The majority of the grounds contain amenity grassland with scattered trees. The grassland is heavily managed and species-poor, dominant grass species are perennial rye-grass *Lolium*

*perenne*, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera* and cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*; common meadow grass *Poa pratensis* was also recorded. Herb and other species are relatively infrequent with white clover *Trifolium repens*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, daisy *Bellis perennis*, dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., cranesbill *Geranium* sp., cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*, common mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* seedlings (target note 2, photo 1). In some places the grassland is less trampled with a longer sward and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* also present (target note 3, photo 2). Bare ground due to trampling and vehicle movements is also present in some areas (particularly at target note 4, photo 1).

The grassland along the eastern side of the site (target note 5, photo 3) has a different species conservation and is more herb-rich, it appears to be grazed by rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus*. Grass species recorded include common bent, red fescue, timothy *Phleum pratense* and cock's-foot. Herb species include, yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, daisy, white clover cat's-ear, ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, eyebright *Euphrasia* sp. and greater plantain *Plantago major*. Small areas of ornamental planting are also present here containing *Hebe* and flowering currant *Ribes sanguineum*.

A variety of deciduous trees planted within the grassland including ornamental birch *Betula* sp., cherry *Prunus* sp., sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and hazel *Corylus avellana* (photos 1, 4 and 5).

A small garden area is present close to the building (target note 6). This contains a concrete seating area, a variety of ornamental shrubs with daffodils *Narcissus* sp., self-set buddleia *Buddleia davidii* and some grassed-over raised concrete beds. An adjacent garden

area is largely bare ground with some daffodils (target note 7). Other areas of non-native shrubs are present at the eastern side of the building.

The northern boundary of the site is marked by a line of immature deciduous trees underplanted with *Crocsmia* (target note 8). A hedge composed of Lawson's cypress *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* is present in the northeast corner, most of the ground below is bare, with some cock's-foot and common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, cat's-ear and mouse-ear present (target note 9).

### 3.3.2 Buildings

A survey map of the building with target notes and potential bat roost features is provided at Figure 3.2.

The day centre building is C-shaped. The easternmost section of the building has two-storeys (photo 9), whilst most of the rest is single-storey (photos 2 and 5). However, due to the slope of the site, the roofline is at the same level throughout for most of the building. An additional section with a northern wing which crosses the centre of the "C" at 90° has a second storey within the roof, with dormer windows (photo 10). A flat roof section is present at the main entrance on the western side of the building (photo 11). The building is block-built with harled walls. The roof is covered with concrete tiles and has wooden soffits all around. The condition of building is deteriorating and numerous gaps in soffit boxes, between roof tiles, at wall heads, where dormer windows meet the main roof and at the gable ends were noted.

A large loft space is present above the entire buildings (photo 12), although this is partitioned by a block wall. Within the loft at the eastern wing of the building wooden

sarking was present throughout with some gaps revealing the presence of a lining between the sarking and roof tiles. The roof void was insulated. The gable end was block and the wooden roof frame formed gaps between the frame and wall. There was no evidence that bats had been present here. There were slatted vents at the gables which allowed light to penetrate but was not sufficient size for bats to access. There was an area where feral pigeons *Columba livia domestica* had previously found a way into the roof void at the wall head as was evident by the presence of droppings (the building manager had commented that the hole had subsequently been blocked). A few house mouse *Mus musculus* droppings were evident, but no bat droppings were found here.

The northern wing is separated from the eastern section of the building by a block wall. This wall had no vent and rendered this part of the roof void darker, but there was no evidence that bats had been present. Within the west wing was the structure was similar with less light as the vent at the gable had been partly covered. No evidence of bat usage was found. The roof void of the two-storey area was also similar in structure. Again, there was no evidence that bats had been using this area.

A number of potential bat roost features were found on the outside of the building. These are described in table 3.1 and shown on figure 3.2.





Figure 3.1: Habitats present on the site. See main text for target note descriptions

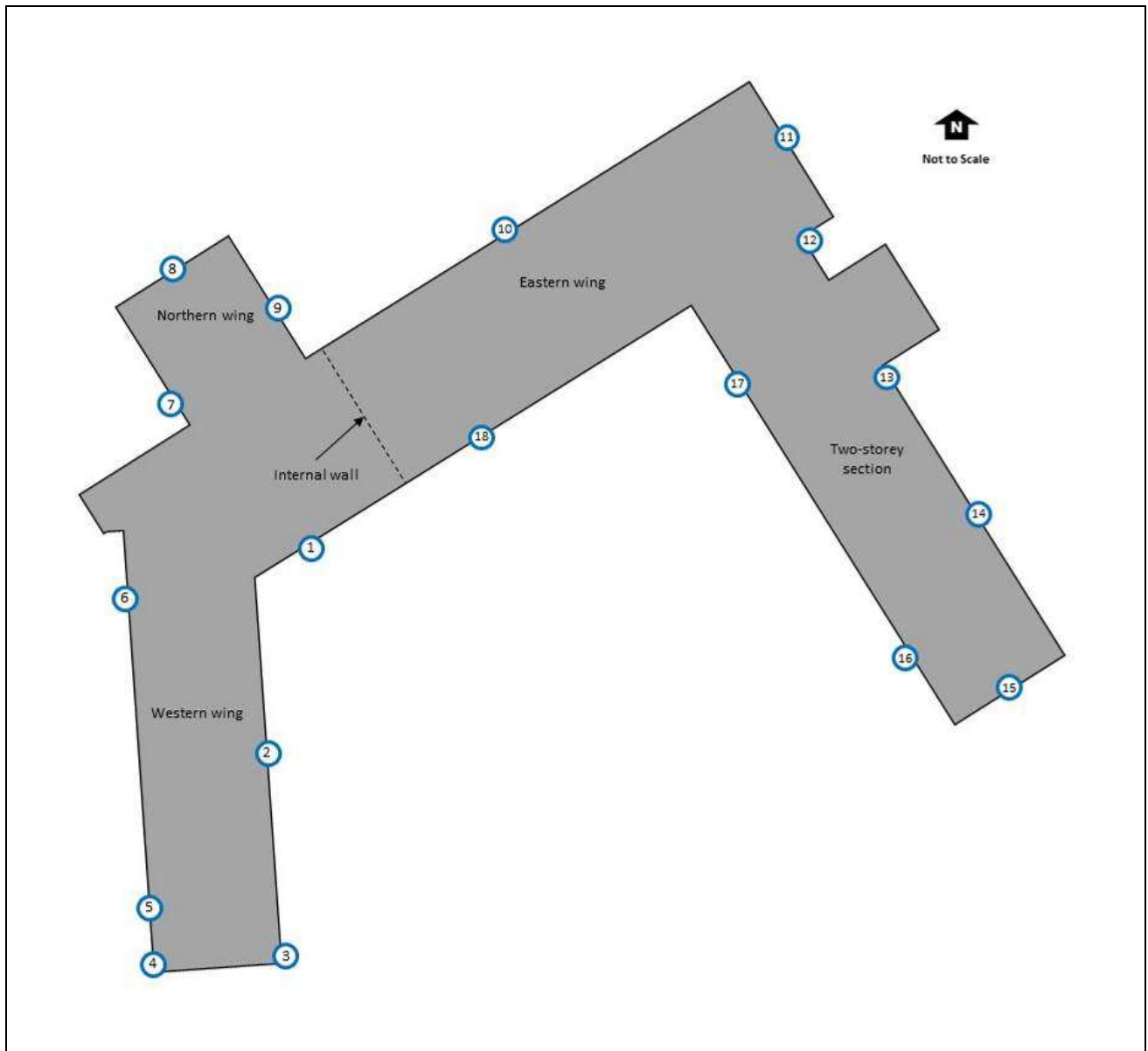


Figure 3.2: Potential bat roost features. See table 3.1 for descriptions in individual features.

**Table 3.1.** *Description of potential bat roost features, refer to figure 3.2 for the plan*

Plan reference	Description
1	Wooden soffit in poor condition with gaps
2	Gaps under roof tiles (photo 13)
3	Gaps between soffit boxes and roof tiles (photo 14)
4	Rot hole in the soffit (photo 15)
5	Gaps between roof tiles, soffits intact
6	Flat roof with concrete fascia, no access points for bats (photo 11)
7	Apparent gap where the dormer meets the roof on the north side
8	Some gaps where the soffit box meets the roof tiles at the north gable, under the tiles. Rot hole in soffit box (photo 16)
9	Gaps where the dormer meets the main roof
10	Roof tiles very mossy here on the north facing roof, which did not appear to have gaps between. Gaps present at the base of the chimney and around the roof vent.
11	Some gaps under the ridge where mortar has fallen away
12	Plastic ends fitted to roof tiles at the gable. No potential for bats here
13	Gaps under ridge tiles
14	Gaps under ridge tiles. Some gaps where the soffit box meets the wall (photo 17)
15	Gaps between roof tiles and the soffit box at the gable
16	Gaps between roof tiles
17	Evidence of pigeon usage. This is the area where the pigeons got into the roof void in the past. This access has since been blocked.
18	Gaps present between roof tiles



**Photo 1:** Centre of the site showing the day centre building and some of the surrounding amenity grassland with ornamental tree.



**Photo 2:** Amenity grassland at the western side of the building.



**Photo 3:** Amenity grassland on the western side of the site has a shorter sward. Some areas of ornamental planting are also present.



**Photo 4:** Sycamore trees within the grassland to the northwest of the building.



**Photo 5:** Cherry and sycamore trees to the north of the building.



**Photo 6:** Garden area to the south of the building.



**Photo 7:** Garden area with bare ground and occasional daffodils.



**Photo 8:** Immature trees along the northern boundary.



**Photo 9:** Two-storey section of the building at the eastern end



**Photo 10:** Northern wing of the building has rooms in the roof space and dormer windows.



**Photo 11:** Flat roof section at the main entrance to the building.



**Photo 12:** Typical internal structure of the building.



**Photo 13:** *Gaps under the concrete roof tiles.*



**Photo 14:** *Gaps between the soffit box and roof tiles.*



**Photo 15:** *Rot hole in soffit box.*



**Photo 16:** *Rot hole in soffit box and gaps between the soffit box and roof tiles.*



**Photo 17:** *Gaps where the soffit box meets the wall.*

### 3.4 *Protected or Notable Species*

#### 3.4.1 *Introduction*

NESBReC returned a number of records of protected or notable species from within the search area. Due to the nature of the habitats present, most of these would be unlikely to be present on the site. However, species which could be found within the zone of influence are considered below.

#### 3.4.2 *Bats*

NESBReC returned a few records of bats from within the search area, all of common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, as well as some of unidentified species. Bats have been seen foraging along the nearby Lang Stracht by the surveyor during the summer of 2021.

No evidence of bats was found during the survey, either internally or externally. However, the building has numerous gaps in soffit boxes, between roof tiles, at wall heads, where dormer windows meet the main roof and at the gable ends, which all have the potential to support bat roosts.

The location of the test centre is within Aberdeen City on the corner of two busy roads where street lighting is present. There are trees scattered around the edge of the site and these are close to areas of gardens. Therefore, there is some foraging potential, although it is sub-optimal.

Given the location and the street lighting at the site, there is the potential for bats to be roosting here, although the potential is considered to be 'Low' in accordance with best practice guidelines (13, see table 2.1).

The trees on site had no potential to support bat roosts, as most were relatively young and had not developed any suitable features for roosts.

#### 3.4.3 *Nesting birds*

A number of bird species have been recorded within the vicinity of the site, including some which are conservation priorities, such as dunnock *Prunella modularis*, starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, house sparrow *Passer domesticus* and song thrush *Turdus philomelos*. Vegetation on the site is suitable for a variety of bird species, including some of these notable species, to forage and for some to nest. The building has previously been used for nesting by feral pigeons, although their access has since been blocked. Due to the condition of the building, there is potential for other smaller bird species to nest, particularly where rot holes enable access into soffit boxes (see photos 15 and 16).

#### 3.4.3 *Mammals*

NESBReC returned records of hedgehogs *Erinaceus europaeus* from within the search area. The majority of the site is of limited value for hedgehogs, however some areas, such as the overgrown garden, could be used for foraging and shelter.

### 3.5 *Ecological Valuation*

The habitats present on the site are relatively commonplace within the local area and no particularly notable plant species were recorded during the survey. However, the site does contain semi-natural habitats, including mature trees. However, some of the larger native-species trees could be considered to be of higher value given their urban context and protection under local planning policy. Therefore the habitats on the site are considered to be of value within the zone-of-influence only, with the exception of more mature native-species trees which are of local ecological value.



The building is considered to be of “low” potential for roosting bats. Therefore, in accordance with best practice guidance (13), a further survey is required to confirm bat presence or likely absence. Therefore it is not possible to value the site in relation to bats until this survey is complete.

## 4.0 Assessment of Likely Impacts in Absence of Mitigation

### 4.1 *Introduction*

The CIEEM guidelines (14) require that the potential impacts of the proposals should be considered in absence of mitigation. In order for a significant adverse effect to occur, the feature being affected must be at least of local value. However, in some cases, features of less than local value may be protected by legislation and/or policy and these are also considered within the assessment. Although significant effects may be identified at this stage of the assessment, it is often possible to provide appropriate mitigation.

### 4.2 *Site Preparation and Construction Activities*

The proposals would result in the loss of the habitats present on the site. As they are not considered to be of ecological value, this would not have a significant ecological effect. The proposals will retain many of the existing trees, however, it will not be possible to retain them all. The loss of native species trees would have an adverse ecological effect.

Vegetation on the site and the building could be used by nesting birds. If clearance and/or demolition occurred whilst birds were nesting on the site, they could be disturbed, and their nests destroyed or damaged. The nests, eggs and nestlings of all wild birds are protected from disturbance, damage and destruction under the Wildlife & Countryside Act and therefore this could result in a legal offence.

The building on the site is potentially suitable for roosting bats. If it did contain a bat roost, it would be lost as a result of the proposals, and any bats present at the time the building was demolished, could be killed or injured as a result. Depending on the species present and the status of the roost, this could have a significant adverse effect on the

conservation status of bats in the local area. Regardless of the value of any roost present, bats and their roosts are protected from damage and disturbance under the Wildlife & Countryside Act and the Habitats Regulations, and therefore this could result in a legal offence.

#### 4.4 *Site Operation*

The proposals would result in an increase in external lighting and human activity around the site at night. This is likely to disrupt the behaviour of nocturnal wildlife such as bats and hedgehogs.

## 5.0 Mitigation, Compensation and Enhancements

### 5.1 *Introduction*

This chapter contains recommendations for further works needed to fully assess the ecological impacts of the proposals and to mitigate any potential adverse effects. In addition, recommendations for the enhancement of nature conservation and biodiversity on the site are included.

### 5.2 *Further Survey*

The building on the site is suitable for roosting bats. Consequently, a survey is required to determine their presence or likely absence, and if present, the species and roost type. Surveys should follow the best practice methodology (13) with respect to effort and timing. Therefore, a single emergence and activity survey should be carried out between May and September. If bat activity is higher than expected, a further survey may be necessary to ascertain whether bats are roosting at the centre.

### 5.3 *Mitigation Measures*

#### 5.3.1 *Tree retention, protection and replacement*

Where possible, native species trees should be retained on the site and protected during construction to prevent accidental damage. If it is necessary to remove any trees, they should be replaced using native species appropriate to the local area.

#### 5.3.2 *Nesting birds*

Demolition and vegetation clearance should be timed to take place outside of the nesting bird season (typically March to August inclusive). If it is necessary to undertake any clearance within this period, the building and any vegetation to be cleared should be

thoroughly checked for the presence of active nests. If any nests are found, they should be retained *in situ* with a suitable buffer of uncleared vegetation until the nestlings have fledged.

### 5.3.3 *Sensitive lighting*

New lighting associated with the proposals must be designed to minimise the effects on nocturnal wildlife, particularly bats, and should follow best practice guidance (15). The following principles will minimise the impact of lighting on nocturnal wildlife and should be applied to the lighting design across the site:

- Use of low-level bollard lighting to minimise light spill
- Directing lights away from the edges of the site and the use of hoods or similar measures to direct light away from important habitats
- Restriction of UV light frequencies through selection of suitable lighting elements or the use of filters
- Use of warm white spectrum lighting elements.

### 5.3.4 *Bats*

Mitigation for bats would be a legal requirement if any roosts are confirmed on the site. The exact mitigation required would depend on the species present and the type and size of the roost. It would be necessary to obtain an EPS mitigation licence from NatureScot, before any works affecting a roost could take place. Any application for such a licence would need to be accompanied by a Method Statement containing full details of any proposed mitigation, which would need to be approved by NatureScot to allow a licence to be issued. If a roost is lost it would be necessary to provide a replacement roost on a like-for-like basis.

## 5.4 *Recommendations for Ecological Enhancements*

### 5.4.1 *Introduction*

Planning policy requires development to provide some form of ecological enhancement. Due to the type of development proposed, opportunities for enhancements related to the specific development are limited. However, the following measures would provide some ecological enhancements.

### 5.4.2 *Planting to benefit pollinators*

There is potential to provide ecological enhancements by planting beneficial plant species within landscaped areas. Nectar-rich shrub species should be planted which will provide a food source for a variety of pollinator species including bees. Native species are preferred as they will benefit the widest range of species. Species such as heathers *Calluna* and *Erica* spp. would be particularly beneficial. However, due to the semi-urban nature of the site, other beneficial species, that provide a nectar source but are not likely to spread into neighbouring areas, such as lavenders *Lavendula* spp., would also be appropriate.

### 5.4.3 *Fruit or seed-bearing trees*

Trees planted within landscaped areas should provide a benefit to local wildlife. Species which bear fruit or seeds would enhance the value of the site for a variety of bird species, particularly those found in suburban habitats including song thrush, dunnock, house sparrow and starling. Native tree species would provide the most benefit. Suitable species include rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, wild service tree *Sorbus torminalis*, wayfaring tree *Viburnum lantana*, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, silver birch *Betula pendula* and downy birch *Betula pubescens*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and spindle *Euonymus europaeus*

## 6.0 Summary and Conclusions

### 6.1 *Summary*

The habitats on the proposed development site at Ashgrove Road West are not considered to be of significant ecological value, and therefore their loss as a result of the development would not have a significant ecological impact. However, some of the native species trees present are considered to be of local ecological value and should be retained wherever possible. The site is considered unlikely to support protected or notable species, however, the presence of bats cannot be conclusively ruled out without undertaking further survey. Vegetation and the building on the site are suitable for a variety of common bird species to nest. The proposals will also result in increased lighting on the site.

In order to mitigate the ecological effects of the proposals, native species trees should be retained where possible. In addition, measures are required to prevent the disturbance of nesting birds during site clearance. A wildlife-friendly lighting design is recommended. If a bat roost is subsequently found on the site, it would be necessary to provide appropriate mitigation and a licence would be required to demolish the building.

There are opportunities to enhance the ecological value of the site post-development, through planting trees and shrubs which will benefit pollinators, birds and other urban wildlife.

### 6.2 *Residual Impacts*

In the absence of mitigation, the proposed development is likely to result in an adverse ecological impact. However, provided all the mitigation measures recommended within

this report are implemented, the proposals would comply with relevant legislation and planning policies that protect biodiversity.

Provided the recommended ecological enhancement measures are implemented, the development would comply with relevant planning policy regarding ecological enhancements. Consequently, there would be no residual impacts.



## 7.0 References

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## Appendix 1

### Relevant planning policy from the Aberdeen Local Development Plan

#### Policy NE1 - Greenspace Network

The Council will protect, promote and enhance the wildlife, access, recreation, ecosystem services and landscape value of the Green Space Network, which is identified on the Proposals Map.

Proposals for development that are likely to destroy or erode the character and/or function of the Green Space Network will not be permitted.

Where major infrastructure projects or other developments necessitate crossing the Green Space Network, such developments should maintain and enhance the coherence of the network. In doing so, provision should be made for access across roads for wildlife and outdoor recreation.

Masterplanning of new developments should consider the existing areas of Green Space Network and identify new areas incorporating Green Space Network.

Masterplans will determine the location, extent and configuration of the Green Space Network within the area, and its connectivity with the wider network.

Development which has a negative impact on existing wildlife habitats and connections, or other features of value to natural heritage, open space, landscape and recreation, should be mitigated through enhancement of the Green Space Network.

#### Policy NE5 - Trees and Woodlands

There is a presumption against all activities and development that will result in the loss of, or damage to, trees and woodlands that contribute to nature conservation, landscape character, local amenity or climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Permanent and temporary buildings and services should be sited so as to minimise adverse impacts on existing and future trees. Appropriate measures should be taken for the protection and long term management of existing trees and new planting both during and after construction.

Where trees may be impacted by a proposed development, a Tree Protection and Mitigation Plan will need to be submitted and agreed with the Council before any development activity commences on site. This should include details of compensatory planting, temporary earth works and any site preparation.

Where applicable, root protection areas should be established, and protective barriers erected prior to any work commencing. See relevant Supplementary Guidance for more information.

Where appropriate, the Council will seek to promote the creation of new woodland and the planting of native trees in association with development. The majority of development sites offer opportunities for the planting of trees and hedgerows. Details of tree and hedgerow planting should be submitted as part of the proposal's landscape strategy

#### Policy NE8 - Natural Heritage

**Designated Sites**

Direct and indirect effects on sites protected by natural heritage designations, be they international, national or local, are important considerations in the planning process.

In all cases, a development that is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, will require an appropriate assessment (under the Habitats Regulations) to demonstrate that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site. Development that would have an adverse effect will only be permitted where there are no alternative solutions and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, and compensatory measures are provided to ensure that the overall coherence of the Natura network is protected.

Development that affects a site designated at a national level, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, will only be permitted where it will not adversely affect the integrity of the area or the qualities for which it has been designated. Where adverse effects are unavoidable, they must be clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance.

Development that is likely to impact a locally designated site should seek to address this through careful design and mitigation measures. Development that, taking into account any proposed mitigation measures, has an adverse effect on a locally designated site will be permitted only where the adverse effects are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of city-wide importance.

**Protected Species**

Some of the species found in Aberdeen are protected under international and national law (including European Protected Species, and species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) while others are identified as being of local importance (North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan species).

Development should seek to avoid any detrimental impact on protected species through the carrying out of surveys and submission of protection plans describing appropriate mitigation where necessary. Development likely to have a detrimental impact on protected species will not be approved unless: for European protected species, a thorough assessment of the site has demonstrated that the development is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest and the population is maintained at a favourable conservation status in its natural range; or, for non-bird species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) or the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, there will be significant social, economic or environmental benefits. In either case there must also be no other satisfactory solution.

**Carbon-rich soils**

New development should avoid areas of peatland or carbon-rich soil. There will be a presumption against development which would involve significant draining or disturbing of peatland or carbon-rich soil.

In all cases of development at any location:-

1. No development will be permitted unless steps are taken to mitigate negative development impacts.
2. An ecological assessment will be required for a development proposal on or likely to affect a nearby designated site, or where there is evidence to suggest that a habitat or species of international, national and local importance exist on the site.

3. A Construction Environmental Management Plan may be required to address any potential negative impacts on designated sites, protected species, peatlands or carbon-rich soils, waterbodies or local biodiversity during the construction phase of a development.
4. Natural Heritage beyond the confines of designated sites should be protected and enhanced. Measures will be taken, in proportion to the opportunities available, to enhance biodiversity through the creation and restoration of habitats and, where possible, incorporating existing habitats.
5. Where feasible, steps to prevent further fragmentation or isolation of habitats must be sought and opportunities to restore links which have been broken will be taken.
6. Natural Riparian Buffer Strips should be created for the protection and enhancement of water bodies and local biodiversity, including lochs, ponds, wetlands, rivers, tributaries, estuaries and the sea.