DixonBrosnan
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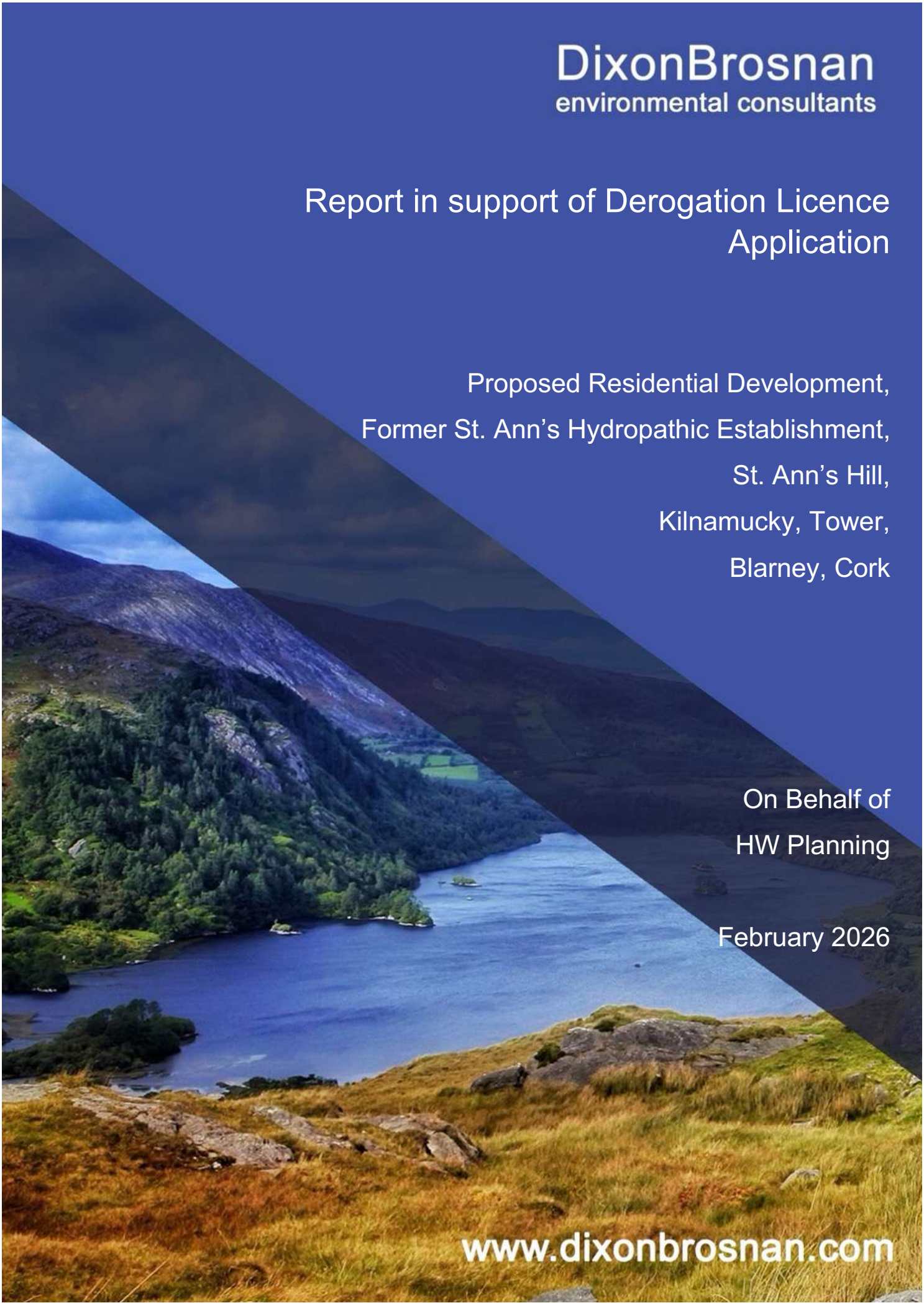
Report in support of Derogation Licence Application

Proposed Residential Development,
Former St. Ann's Hydropathic Establishment,
St. Ann's Hill,
Kilnamucky, Tower,
Blarney, Cork

On Behalf of
HW Planning

February 2026



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Project	**Report in support of Derogation Licence for Proposed Residential Development, Former St. Ann's Hydropathic Establishment, St. Ann's Hill, Kilnamucky, Tower, Blarney, Cork**	
Client	HW Planning	
Project Ref.	26006	
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Date	**Revision**	**Prepared By**
06/02/26	Issue to client	Carl Dixon BSc MSc
12/02/26	Issue to client (2)	Sorcha Sheehy BSc PhD

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1. Introduction

DixonBrosnan were commissioned to undertake bat surveys at the site of a proposed residential development at St. Ann's Hill, Tower, Co. Cork. This planning application was submitted to Cork City Council in September 2025 (25/44173).

Bat surveys were carried out in 2017 (by Abbott Ecology) and in 2023/2025 (by DixonBrosnan). The proposed development involved the demolition/refurbishment of several outbuildings one of which supports roosting bats. In line with the relevant guidance detailed below, a derogation licence is sought for the works. This derogation licence application has been compiled by Carl Dixon MSc and Dr. Sorcha Sheehy PhD.

Carl Dixon holds an Honours Degree (BSc) in Ecology and a Masters (MSc) in Ecological Monitoring from UCC. He is a senior ecologist who has over 25 years' experience in ecological assessment. Prior to setting up DixonBrosnan Environmental Consultants in 2000, Carl set up and ran Core Environmental Services which included REPS planning for landowners and ecological assessments. Carl has particular experience in freshwater ecology, including electrofishing fish stock assessments and water quality assessments. He also has considerable experience in habitat mapping and mammal ecology including survey work and reporting in relation to Badgers and bats. Other competencies include surveys for invasive species and bird surveys. Carl has extensive experience with regards to EIAR and NIS mitigation and impact assessment. He has experience in large-scale industrial developments with extensive experience in complex assessments as part of multi-disciplinary teams. Such projects include gas pipelines, incinerators, electrical cable routes, oil refineries and quarries.

Carl Dixon has considerable experience in bat survey and bat mitigation measures/roost design. Carl was the primary coordinator and surveyor for a heritage council-funded project serving all the river bridges in County Waterford for bats. He has designed bat roosts for Lesser horseshoe in conjunction with the NPWS for sites in West Cork. Carl has completed specialized training courses relating to bats in Ireland and the UK and has considerable experience in using a variety of bat survey equipment and subsequent software analysis of data.

Dr. Sorcha Sheehy PhD (Ecology/ornithology) is an ecologist and ornithologist who has worked for 15 years in environmental consultancy. She has worked on Screening/NISs for a range of small and large-scale projects with expertise in assessing impacts on birds. Sorcha's PhD research focused on bird behaviour at airports, where she studied bird avoidance behaviour and collision risk to aircraft. Her research involved field observations, post-mortem analysis and radar surveys. Sorcha has worked on bird collision risk assessments at airports throughout Ireland including Dublin airport, Cork airport, Shannon airport and Kerry airport. During her consultancy work Sorcha carried out field-based surveys and environmental reports including NIS, AA screening and EIARs. Notable projects include the Arklow Bank Wind Park, Indaver Ireland Waste Management Facility at Ringaskiddy, Irving Oil Whitegate Refinery (IOWR), Shannon LNG and Greenlink Interconnector.

2. Background

The proposed development site at Tower, Blarney, Co. Cork is located approximately 12km northwest of Cork City centre and is accessed via the regional route R617 to the south (**Figure 1**). The site formerly held the St. Ann's Hydropathic Establishment and remains of the old hydropathic facility and associated out-buildings remain on site. The facility, built in 1843 and closed in 1952, today it comprises of the severely degraded ruins of the former hydro baths, estate and parkland.

The residential areas associated with Tower village are located to the south of the site. Lands to the north of the site are largely rural and agricultural. The River Shournagh runs along the eastern boundary of the site. A permitted development (for 5 houses) is currently under construction at the southeast of the site.

Natural ground levels within the site range from 29.06mOD along the south-eastern quadrant of the site to 74.5mOD along the north-western quadrant.

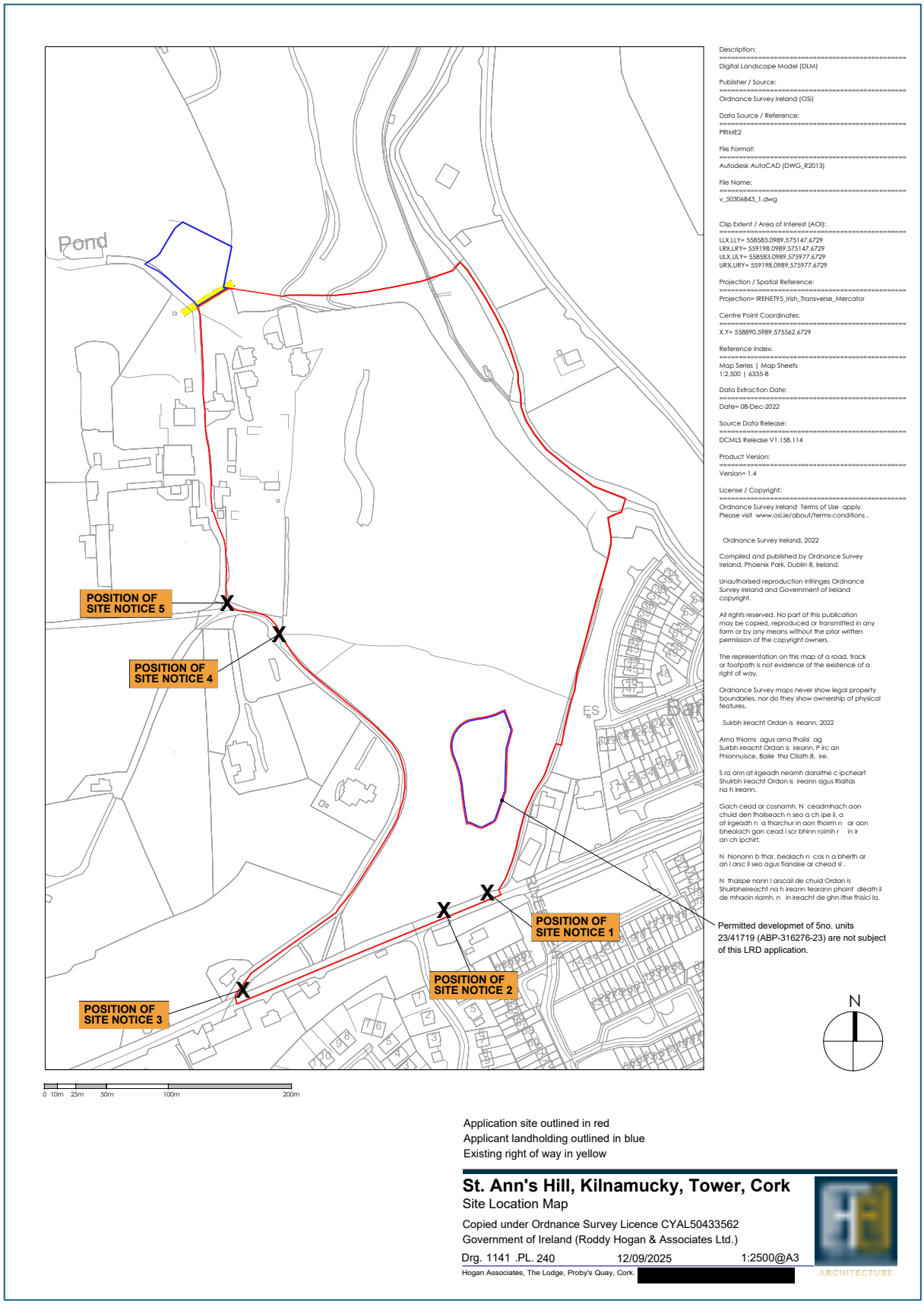

Figure 1. Site location | Source Horgan Lynch

Figure 2. Site layout | Source Horgan Lynch

OMD(C) Ltd. intend to apply for a Planning Permission for a Large-Scale Residential Development (LRD) of 100 no. residential units comprising 63 no. dwelling houses, 23 no. apartment units and 14 no. apartment/duplex units, a creche facility and all ancillary site development works at lands associated with the Former St. Ann's Hydropathic Establishment, St. Ann's Hill, Kilnamucky, Tower, Blarney, Cork.

The proposed development consists of

a. The partial demolition, conservation and refurbishment of the remains of the former St. Ann's Hydropathic Establishment which is a Protected Structure (Reference PS1168), to facilitate integration into a proposed two storey apartment building containing 16 no. apartment units (8 no. 1 bedroom and 8 no. 2 bedroom) and an adjacent two storey mixed-use building, providing a creche at ground floor and 2 no. 2 bedroom apartments at first floor.

b. The partial demolition, conservation and refurbishment of the remains of former stable buildings to facilitate integration into 6 no. terrace units (1 no. 4 bedroom, 3 no.3 bedroom and 2 no. 2 bedroom).

c. The refurbishment and change of use of a former Coach House to 1 no. 3 bedroom detached dwelling house.

d. The construction of a two storey apartment building accommodating 5 no. apartment units (2 no. 2 bedroom and 3 no. 1 bedroom)

e. The construction of a 2-3 storey apartment/duplex building accommodating 14 no. units (7 no. 2 bedroom and 7 no. 1 bedroom).

f. The proposed development also provides for the construction of an additional 56 no. detached, semi-detached and terraced dwelling houses comprising 15 no. 4 bedroom, 17 no. 3 bedroom and 24 no. 2 bedroom units.

g. The proposed development also includes the restoration of the former Clock Tower structure and parkland which served the former St. Ann's Hydropathic Establishment.

h. Access to the proposed development will be provided via an existing vehicular entrance and internal road from the R617 permitted by Cork County Council Planning Reference 18/7111 (An Bord Pleanála Reference 305373-19) as amended by Cork City Council Planning Reference 23/41719 (An Bord Pleanála Reference 316276-23).

i. Ancillary site development works include the provision of bicycle and bin storage facilities.

An overview of the proposed development site layout is shown in **Figure 2**.

3. Ecological survey and site assessment

3.1 Preliminary roost assessment of buildings (and trees)

Buildings inspections were carried out in 2017, 2023 and 2025 to identify potential access points, 'potential roosting features (PRFs)' and any evidence indicating the presence of bats using the buildings within the proposed development site. A preliminary roost assessment was

carried at ground level on all trees earmarked for removal within the proposed development site as per Collins (2023). These assessments followed the guidelines set out in 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th ed)' (Collins, 2023).

Although foraging activity was observed within the proposed development site, no activity indicative of emergence or direct emergence of bats from trees onsite was recorded during the 2023 or 2025 surveys. Natterer's Bat social calls associated with roost behaviour were recorded at a veteran Maritime Pine during the 2017 survey (T1755). It is noted that this tree will be retained (and protected) within the proposed development. However, no emergence was recorded from this Maritime Pine in 2023 or 2025.

There are number of buildings earmarked for demolition/refurbishment including the old hydropathic facility and associated out-buildings. Preliminary roost assessment of the buildings onsite found that the old stables/coach house had moderate potential for roosting bats. During the 2017 surveys evidence was found of small (one or two individuals of each species), but consistently used, day-time roosts and night-roosting of Brown Long-eared Bat and Whiskered Bat via dusk/dawn roost watches, and passive bat detector monitoring Lesser Horseshoe Bat was also recorded exploring this building during the 2017 surveys. All other site buildings are in a considerable state of disrepair and are classified as low to negligible potential for roosting bats. Evidence of Whiskered Bat and potentially Brown long-eared bat roosting was also recorded within the stables building in 2023 and 2025. Further detail on the site buildings and surveys is provided below.

Figure 3. Aerial view of site buildings B - old hydropathic facility; C – Belfry; E Stables and Coach house (with corrugated roof at right of photo)

Table 1. Preliminary roost assessment of buildings within the proposed development site

Building name	Photos	Description
Old stables and Coach house (E in **Figure 3**)	  	This has several distinct sections. Only one area (within the stables block) has an intact roof. Within this part of the stables complex the roof is partially intact consisting of corrugated iron sheeting. The walls are intact, although there are large areas of damage and they have begun to collapse. This is not a sustainable structure and will not persist in the long-term It is noted that Barn owl is also nesting in this building (within the chimney) During 2017 surveys, activity survey indicated that this building was being used as a day roost for a small number of Whiskered and Brown long-eared. This building is an advanced state of disrepair and could not support significant numbers of bats. But this is of moderate value and does provide PRF-Is for smaller numbers of bats. The remaining/adjoining areas of the stables and coach house are generally open at the front external walls intact. Small sections of roof remain in place but mostly it is collapsed. Densely growing vegetation within most of the walls. The render is largely intact on the walls. These remaining areas have low potential for roosting bats.

Building name	Photos	Description
Old hydropathic building (B in **Figure 3**))	 	Little remains of this structure, but a line of external wall is still intact, so a freestanding wall. Some wood frames on the walls. Cracks, crevices and holes throughout the structure. Considerable ivy coverage. Low value for roosting bats. Individual PRF-Is
Belfry (C in **Figure 3**)		This is a freestanding, relatively modern structure. Render rest of the intact. Some cracks and crevices Low potential for roosting bats.

Building name	Photos	Description
		
Smaller dwelling	 	Internal walls intact. Remains of wooden roof. Concrete walls. No significant cracks/crevices. Some light ivy coverage. Low to negligible potential

Building name	Photos	Description
		
Old shed/clubhouse	 	Corrugated iron and wooden structure currently used as a garden shed. Rusted but largely intact. Relatively damp internally. No evidence of usage. Pigeons nesting. Low potential for bats

3.2 Abbott Ecology Bat Activity Survey 2017

Detailed surveys were carried out at the proposed development site in 2017 by Dr. Isobell Abbott. Four night time bat activity surveys were carried out in June and July 2017 (11/06/2017, 15/06/2017, 11/07/2017 and 18/07/2017). Bat behaviour was observed where possible, and echolocation was recorded using broadband bat detectors; Wildlife Acoustics EM3+ with attached GPS unit, Wildlife Acoustics SM4BAT FS and BatBox Duet. Recordings were made of acoustic bat activity at selected locations over a number of consecutive full

nights (sunset to sunrise) using passive detectors, Wildlife Acoustics Song Meter SM4BAT FS (Passive and Passive B 19-30th May; Passive C and Passive D 30th May-11th June). Passive detector monitoring involves leaving a suitable bat detector in position with no observer present, and bats which pass near enough to the detector microphone trigger a recording, and their calls are stored for later analysis. Bat sonograms were manually analysed and identified to species using specialist software, Wildlife Acoustics Kaleidoscope Viewer Pro, noting the time and date of bat registration files. Overlapping bat species flying simultaneously, feeding buzzes (indicating a prey capture attempt by a bat), and social calling were also noted. Weather conditions were mostly favourable during passive detector deployments.

During these surveys bat activity and diversity were high at the site, with eight bat species detected; Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Leisler's Bat, Brown Long-eared Bat, Whiskered Bat, Natterer's Bat, Daubenton's Bat and a single occurrence of Lesser Horseshoe Bat. Evidence indicating minor bat roosts of Brown Long-eared Bat and Whiskered Bat in stone ruins on site was found, indicating use as small day-time roost and as a 'night roost'. These species may also roost adjacent to the site. Summer roosts of Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Leisler's Bat also occur just off-site to the west, within close vicinity, with the exact roost locations remaining unknown. Several trees were also identified as having potential roost features, and as suitable autumn mating trees. Natterer's Bat social calls associated with roost behaviour were recorded at a veteran Maritime Pine at the north of the site.

Overall the site was assessed as being of high ecological value at a County scale to bats by the 2017 ecology report. This was due to the rich bat community and habitats on-site, and the connectivity of the landscape with suitable habitats off-site (e.g. adjoining riparian woodland along the River Shournagh valley, and a number of potential roost buildings near the site). Roosting, foraging and commuting habitats on site include broad-leaved woodland, high quality mature tree-lines, scattered trees, a small stream (now classified as a drainage ditch), roosting crevices in stone ruins, and the presence of several veteran oak and other trees with suitable roost features.

3.3 DixonBrosnan Bat Activity Surveys 2023 and 2025

Bat activity surveys were conducted within the proposed development site under suitable weather conditions on 16th and 17th of September 2023 and on the 10th of June, 24th of June, 27th of August 2025, 8th of September 2025. The surveys were carried out 15 minutes before sunset (Collins 2023). Surveys used Elekon Batloggers, Batbox Duet, EchoMeter Touch 2 PRO bat detectors and Bat box duet. An emergence survey using a Pulsar Helion 2 XP50 Pro Thermal Imaging Camera was also carried out to identify potential emergence points from buildings within the survey area. The primary purpose of bat surveys was to assess usage of trees and habitats, located within or in close proximity to the site boundary. Activity surveys were also carried out to identify foraging and/or commuting routes within the proposed development site boundary (i.e., buildings, woodland, treelines, drainage ditch, etc.).

3.3.1 2023 Emergence/activity surveys

Bat activity surveys commenced on the 16th of September 2023. An elechon bat logger was placed in the old stables where Whiskered and Brown Long eared bats were consistantly recorded during the 2017 surveys.

Bat activity was recorded throughout the survey period with more pronounced periods of activity between 20.00 and 21.00, 00.30 to 1.00 and to a lesser extent from 6.45 to 6.56. Pipistrelle (Common, Soprano and Pipistrelle species unidentified) were the most common species with 316 recordings. This is indicative of localised foraging within the survey area. Leisler's (15 recordings) were sporadic with the highest levels recorded between 21.00 and 21.30. This is probably indicative of a relatively small number of bats foraging in the wider landscape. Brown Long-eared bat were recorded on 14 occasions with 5 recordings within the potential emergence window (20.31 to 21.49). Myotis bats were recorded on 51 occasions with Natterers Bat and Whiskered Bat the most probable species although it is noted that identification of myotis bat to species levels can be problematic. Although activity was sporadic, there was activity in the potential emergence period (20.16 to 21.31) and within the re-entry window (6.29 to 6.56).

A second Elekon Batlogger was placed on an old ruin to the south of this shed on the 16th of September 2023. Soprano pipistrelle were the most common species recorded (88 recordings Soprano Pipistrelle, 9 recordings of Common Pipistrelle and 1 recording of Nathius Pipistrelle, Pipistrelle sp. 3 recordings). Other species recorded were Brown Long-eared (13 recordings), Leisler's (26 recordings) and Myotis species (Natterers Bat 3 recordings, Whiskered Bat 12 recordings and Myotis species 3 recordings). Brown Long Eared were recorded within the potential emergence window (3 recordings 20.59 to 22.11) with three recordings within the possible re-entry window (5.26 to 6.16). Three recordings for Whiskered bat were recorded within the potential emergence window (20.32 to 21.25) with four recordings within the potential re-entry window (5.12 to 6.52).

In general survey results are generally similar to those recorded by Atkins (Dr. Isobell Abbott) in 2017.

Their report noted the following:

Evidence of roosting in the Hydro ruins provided by passive detector monitoring was confirmed during dusk/dawn watches. Brown Long-eared Bat and Whiskered Bat (at least one individual each) were observed emerging from the old stable ruins at the Passive B location, while it was still relatively bright, during two dusk roost watches on 11.6.2017 and 15.6.2017 and entering during the dawn watch on 18.7.2017. During the dawn survey, a passive bat detector was positioned inside the structure. It did not detect Brown Long-eared or Whiskered Bat calls which were detected from outside the structure, but it did detect social calling of Brown Long-eared Bat inside the structure after an individual was observed to enter through the open door at Passive B location (Plate 1) at 04:53 (43 minutes before sunrise). As mentioned, it did not prove possible to find the roost spot and possible spots.

Surveys by DixonBrosnan in 2023 recorded both Whiskered Bat and Brown Long Eared Bat in the stables building where these two species were recorded in 2017. Based on the pattern of activity it is considered probable that a small number of both species continue to utilise this building as a roosting site. Lesser Horseshoe bat were not detected during the 2023 surveys, although it is noted that the 2023 survey was more limited in scope and only one occurrence was recorded in 2017. The 2017 survey also recorded Daubenton's Bat foraging along the River Shournagh. This area was not surveyed in 2023.

Plate 1. Locations of passive detectors

3.3.2 2025 Emergence/activity surveys

June 2025

Emergence surveys were carried out at three locations within the complex of old buildings in the north-western section of the site using three Elekon bat loggers and an EchoMeter Touch 2 PRO bat detectors. Surveys were carried out on 10th of June 2025 and 11th of June 2025. The primary focus of the survey was to assess roosting activity within the buildings. Following the emergence period general transect surveys for bat activity were carried out along the external site boundaries.

Activity surveys recorded Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Leisler's Bat with activity concentrated along the northern and eastern boundaries and along the southern area of woodland. Brown Long Eared and Daubenton's Bat were also recorded along the eastern boundary near the River Shournagh with a second unidentified myotis bat recorded foraging in this area.

A bat logger was positioned with the building where roosts had previously been identified in 2017 and 2023. The most common species recorded were Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Leisler's Bat. Signals for Whiskered bat were recorded early in the survey period with 33 signals between 21.42 and 23.23. 18 sporadic signals were recorded later in the survey period from 00.38 to 4.41. No signals for Lesser Horseshoe were detected. On the 11th of June a similar pattern was observed with signals for Whiskered bat recorded from 22.30 to 00.59 (15 signals) and a further 11 signals sporadically recorded between 1.07 and 5.02.

A bat logger was also positioned in proximity to a derelict building where bat roosts had previously been detected and 151 signals were recorded. The most common species detected

were Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle which were detected foraging throughout the survey period. Leisler's bat was also recorded sporadically and was observed foraging along external boundaries at height post the emergence period. Four signals for Whiskered bat were recorded (22.51, 22.52, 22.40, 00.45 and 00.56) although no bats were seen emerging. No signals for Brown Long-eared bat or Lesser Horseshoe bat were recorded. Four signals for Whiskered bat were recorded on the 11th June between 22.30 and 22.45 with signals also recorded at 23.38 and 00.43.

A bat logger was located within the complex of buildings in the northern section of the site. Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Leisler's were the most common species. Whiskered bat was recorded sporadically at 22,40, 22.51, 22.52, 00.45, 2.45 and 3.06). Brown Long Eared bat and Lesser Horseshoe Bat were not recorded. On the 11th June a similar pattern was recorded with most signals for Whiskered bat (11 signals) recorded early in the survey period (22.09 -00.40) with a second set of three signals from 1.38 to 1.59.

September 2025

Additional surveys were carried out on the 8th September 2025 with two surveyors using three Elekon bat loggers, an Ecotouch pro and a Haleon thermal imaging camera. The primary purpose was to reassess emergence from the stables building in the western section of the site which was previously found to support roosting bats. A secondary objective was to assess the treeline along the western boundary as a commuting route and foraging habitat.

A review of the footage from the thermal imaging camera indicates that this building is still used as a roosting site with one Whiskered Bat recorded emerging from the building as indicated below in Plate 2.

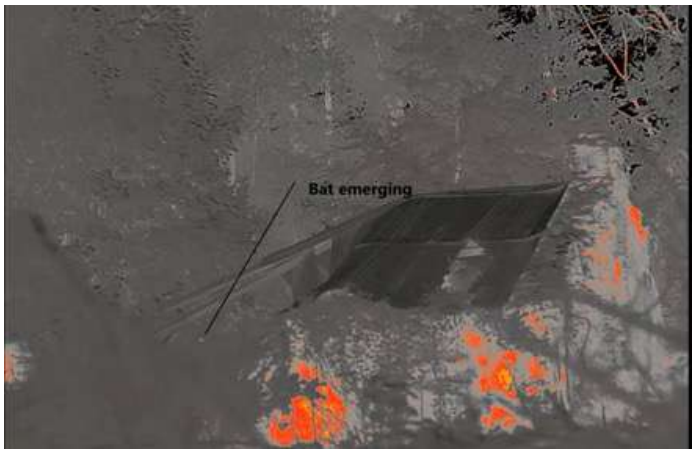

Plate 2. Roosting bat emerging from building

Relatively high levels of bat activity was recorded along the treeline which forms the western boundary of the site. Most of the activity was confined to the northern section of this boundary where the treeline is denser. Twenty eight bats were recorded on the thermal imaging camera commuting or foraging within along this boundary or in proximity to it (See Plate 3, 4 and 5). Most of the activity was recorded early in the survey period with levels of activity drooping off quite rapidly. A review of the data from the bat detectors indicates that there was high levels of Soprano Pipistrelle and Common Pipistrelle activity with sporadic signals for Leisler's Bat, Brown Long Eared and Whiskered Bat (emerging from the building).

Plate 3. Bat commuting along treeline at west of site

Plate 4. Bat commuting at front of building

Plate 5. Leisler's overflying treeline along western boundary

2025 Surveys- static detectors

Two static detectors (Songmeter Minibat) were deployed within the proposed development site from the 24th June 2025 to the 9th June 2025. The purpose of the survey was to assess

general usage patterns and in particular to assess for the presence of Lesser Horseshoe bat which had been previously detected at the site. The detectors were located as follows

- Detector X1 was placed in close proximity to the woodland which separates the site from the River Shournagh.
- Detector Y1 was placed in within the complex of ruined buildings in the northwest section of the site

Results Y1

Approximately 7000 bat calls were logged during the survey period which is indicative of relatively high levels of bat activity. The three most common species recorded, as expected were Soprano Pipistrelle, Common Pipistrelle and Leisler's Bat with signals recorded throughout the survey period. The data is indicative of foraging within and in proximity to the site boundary. Myotis bats (most probably Whiskered Bat) were recorded throughout the survey period with some activity recorded on every date within the survey period. In general activity patterns were not consistent. However there were first signals detected within the potential emergence period on several dates. Brown Long-eared Bat was recorded sporadically with much lower levels of activity recorded. Brown Long-eared Bat was recorded sporadically with much lower levels of activity recorded. No records for Lesser Horseshoe Bat were recorded.

Results X1

Approximately 8000 calls were logged for this site which is located close to riparian woodland along the River Shournagh. Rivers generally provide high value foraging resources although due to topography not all of the bats foraging along the river which is outside the site boundary would have been detected. Again the most common species recorded were Soprano Pipistrelle, Common Pipistrelle and Leisler's bat with high numbers of signals for each species indicative of continual foraging activity. Daubenton's bat which preferentially forages along rivers was detected at moderate levels and a second myotis bat (most probably Whiskered Bat) was also recorded sporadically throughout the survey period. Low levels of Brown Long-eared bat activity was also recorded. No signals for Lesser Horseshoe bat were recorded.

Transect surveys

Activity surveys of the site were carried out on 10th of June and 24th of June 2025 (using EchoMeter Touch 2 PRO bat detectors), along the other areas of treelines and woodland at the centre, south and south-east of the site. The strip of trees and scrub at the centre of the site includes a number of mature Oaks. Walkover surveys recorded moderate levels of commuting/foraging activity in this area i.e. Common and Soprano Pipistrelle. Lower levels of activity were recorded at the treeline in the southwest of the site, with Common and Soprano Pipistrelle recorded. Limited records of Common and Soprano Pipistrelle were recorded along the south-eastern treeline adjoining the drainage ditch.

3.4 Summary of Bat Activity Onsite

Overall the site is considered of moderate local value for bats. Foraging habitat is provided by treelines/woodland along external boundaries and by the River Shournagh with its associated

riparian zone. The most common foraging species were Soprano Pipistrelle, Common Pipistrelle and Leisler's Bat. Daubenton's bat was recorded along the riparian habitat along the eastern boundary. Brown Long-eared bat was sporadically recorded. A myotis bat, most likely Whiskered Bat was recorded with sporadic signals during emergence surveys and on static detectors. Thermal imaging recorded a single Whiskered bat emerging from the stables.

The old hydropathic ruins have become overgrown with vegetation and are surrounded by tall, mature trees. This provides insect prey and shelter to bats. Bats are currently using this area for commuting and foraging, as well as roosting by Whiskered Bat (and previously Brown Long-eared bat).

Passive monitoring and activity surveys confirmed the importance of the River Shournagh at the eastern site perimeter as a foraging site for Daubenton's Bat, Whiskered Bat, Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle. Daubenton's Bat is a so-called 'trawling' bat species, which hunts at low heights above water, often <50 cm, capturing insects directly from or close to the smooth surface of slow-moving rivers. It also hunts at lakes and other habitats such as woodland and hedgerow on occasion. The internal drainage ditches onsite do not have significant water to provide foraging areas for Daubenton's bat and this species was not recorded in the interior of the site during the 2023 or 2025 surveys.

The emergence data from 2025 indicates that Whiskered bat are still using the old stables (in ruin) as a roosting site. Relatively consistent patterns of activity for this species were recorded, with signals during the possible emergence window occurring as well as confirmed emergence (on thermal imaging). The roosting status for Brown Long-eared bat is less certain, with only sporadic and irregular activity detected.

No records for Lesser Horseshoe bat were recorded during the 2023 and 2025 surveys and it is considered unlikely that this site of value for LHB roosting. Surveys carried out in the Blarney-Ballincollig area in 2022 and 2023 confirmed Lesser Horseshoe bat roosting within the Dungeon associated with Blarney Castle (c.1.7km southeast). A small Lesser Horseshoe Roost has Ovens Cave system (c.6.5km southwest) is a known roosting location for Lesser Horseshoe Bat. The associated riparian corridor along the River Shournagh, which adjoins the eastern site boundary, presents a potentially viable commuting route between Ovens Cave/Iniscarra areas and Blarney, if such a relationship exists (O'Donnell Environmental 2024).

4. Proposed development and details of works requiring derogation

4.1 Planning history

The site is currently under the ownership of OMD(C) Ltd. There have been two previously permitted developments permitted onsite. The current application proposes to construct a large-scale residential development (LRD) in place of a permitted nursing home development.

Cork County Council Reg. Ref: 18/7111 (ABP Ref: 305373)

Previous planning application for the re-development of the full Hydro lands associated with the Former St. Ann's Hydropathic Establishment consisted of the construction of a nursing home, 29 no. detached houses (26 no. single storey and 3 no. 2-storey houses) and all

ancillary site works. This application was granted by Cork County Council (Reg. Ref: 18/7111) and later granted permission by An Bord Pleanála (305373).

Cork City Council Reg. Ref: 23/41719 (ABP Ref: 316276)

Following the acquisition of the lands with the benefit of planning permission, the applicants lodged an application to amend the previous planning permission with an application to replace 4 no. single storey dwellings with 2-storey dwellings and the construction of an additional dwelling and all ancillary site works on the southern portion of the site. This application was refused by Cork City Council (Reg. Ref: 23/41719) and later granted permission by An Bord Pleanála (316276).

The applicants are currently on site constructing the 5 no. dwellings which were permitted by An Bord Pleanála in May 2024, Cork County Council Reg. Ref: 23/41719 An Bord Pleanála ABP-316276 -23, refers. This application amended the previous planning permission for the re-development of the full Hydro complex, and which consisted of the construction of a nursing home, 29 no. detached houses (26 no. single storey and 3 no. 2-storey houses) and all ancillary site works. This application was granted by Cork County Council (Reg. Ref: 18/7111) and following first party and third party appeals a development of 23 no. dwellings and a nursing home was granted by An Bord Pleanála in February 2020 (305373).

From a zoning perspective, the use of the site for residential purposes is considered acceptable and the use of the site for new residential development has already been established with the extant permission on the site. As previously outlined to the Planning Authority the permitted nursing home had been on the market for some time, and it is now apparent and accepted that this is no longer a viable use for the site. Given the applicants' desire to ensure the future use and viability of the remaining protected structure, they feel compelled to consider alternative use. In light of the zoning objective for the lands, its location within Tower and the current housing crisis, the applicants are proposing to develop housing as a replacement for the permitted nursing home. The design and scale of the proposed housing has full regard to the permitted scale of development on the site and we the Planning Authority have accepted that principle of this change of use in pre-planning discussions.

4.2 Proposed works requiring derogation

The former stables building will be demolished to facilitate the proposed development. These works require a derogation licence.

5. Evidence of derogation tests

Article 16 of the Habitats Directive sets out three pre-conditions, all of which must be met before a derogation from the requirements of Article 12 or Article 13 of the Directive can be granted. These preconditions are also set out in Regulation 54 of the Regulations. The preconditions are as follows:

1. A reason (s) listed in Regulation 54 (a)-(e) applies

2. No satisfactory alternatives exist

3. Derogation would not be detrimental to the maintenance of population(s) at a favourable conservation status. It is believed that the pre-conditions for granting a derogation licence have been met, as follows.

5.1 Test 1 - Reasons for Seeking Derogation

As outlined above, evidence of Whiskered Bat and potentially Brown long-eared bat roosting was recorded within the stables building in 2023 and 2025. The former stables building will be demolished to facilitate the proposed development (See **Figure 4**). These works require a derogation licence.

Regulation 54(2) (a)–(e) states that a derogation licence may be granted for any of the reasons listed (a) to (e).

We are of the opinion that the following reason applies:

(c) In the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment.

OMD(C) Ltd. intend to apply for a Planning Permission for a Large-Scale Residential Development (LRD) of 100 no. residential units comprising 63 no. dwelling houses, 23 no. apartment units and 14 no. apartment/duplex units, a creche facility. This is likely to provide housing for an estimated 300 individuals. The demolition of the stables building is required as part of this development as this is located in an area of the site where new housing is proposed (as outlined in Section 2 of this report; location of stables illustrated in habitat map **figure 5**).

Based on the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 and its 2-year progress report, Tower is designated as one of the "Urban Towns" for growth. The core strategy outlines the following population targets and projections for Tower:

- Baseline Population (2016): 3,274
- Population Target (2028): 4,437
- Targeted Growth: Approximately 1,163 additional people (a 35.5% increase).

While the 2022-2028 plan aims for this growth, a 2-year progress report indicated that Tower, along with other metropolitan towns like Blarney and Glanmire, was tracking behind its targeted growth rate compared to the city centre and other areas. The plan emphasizes sustainable, compact growth for these areas, supporting the wider Cork Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP). Given the above, the proposed development is required to achieve population growth targets.

The subject site is zoned ZO 01 – Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods in the Cork City Development Plan 2022. The objective of which is '*to protect and provide for residential uses and amenities, local services and community, institutional, educational and civic uses*.' where residential development is permitted in principle.

The proposed development is required to fulfil a housing need and, as such, is of public interest of a social and economic nature. The provision of a home supports social and economic development and, as such, outweighs the conservation interest of the bat species.

5.2 Test 2 - There is no satisfactory alternative

Alternative solutions considered included not demolishing the stables building (i.e. 'do-nothing). However, that option is not a long-term solution as the building will continue to fall into disrepair from ingress of rain and wind in the absence of works. The stables building is the last building onsite with a partially intact roof and is the only building onsite supporting bats. All other buildings i.e. coach house, hydropathic facility are in advanced states of disrepair and do not provide shelter for roosting bats. Should the stables building remain untouched, this will continue to deteriorate (similar to the other site buildings) and will no longer provide shelter for roosting bats. The building is not viable as a bat roost in the long-term.

5.3 Test 3. - Impact of a derogation on Conservation Status

Surveys by DixonBrosnan in 2023 recorded both Whiskered Bat and Brown Long Eared Bat in the stables building where these two species were recorded in 2017. Based on the pattern of activity it is considered probable that a small number of both species continue to utilise this buildings as a roosting site. The emergence data from 2025 indicates that Whiskered bat are still using the old stables as a roosting site. The roosting status for Brown Long-eared bat is less certain, with only sporadic and irregular activity detected.

a) Whiskered bat

Surveys indicated that Whiskered bat is potentially roosting in the stables building.

Whiskered bat is an Annex IV bat species under the EU Habitats Directive. The status of this bat species is listed as Least Concern. The national Natterer's bat population is currently unknown (Aughney *et al.,* 2022). This species, although widely distributed, is rarely recorded in Ireland. It is often found in woodland, frequently near water. Flying high, near the canopy, it maintains a steady beat and sometimes glides as it hunts. It also gleans spiders from the foliage of trees. Whiskered bats prefer to roost in buildings, under slates, lead flashing or exposed beneath the ridge beam within attics. However, they also use cracks and holes in trees and sometimes bat boxes. The whiskered bat is one of our least studied species and further work is required to establish its status in Ireland (Marnell *et. al.* 2022).

According to the criteria outlined in Marnell *et. al.* (2022) the conservation significance of the roost in the stables building is "*Small numbers of rarer species. Not a maternity roost".* The Conservation Significance according to Marnell *et. al.* (2022) results determines the bat mitigation measures required. In relation to this species of bat, the mitigation recommended is *"Provision of new roosting facilities where possible. Need not be exactly like-for-like, but should be suitable, based on species requirements. Minimum timing constraints or monitoring requirements".*

Therefore it is considered that the loss of a roost will not impact on the favourable conservation status in their natural range and will not have a detrimental effect on the local bat population of Whiskered bat. The provision of new roosting facilities follows the guidelines (Marnell *et. al.* (2022).

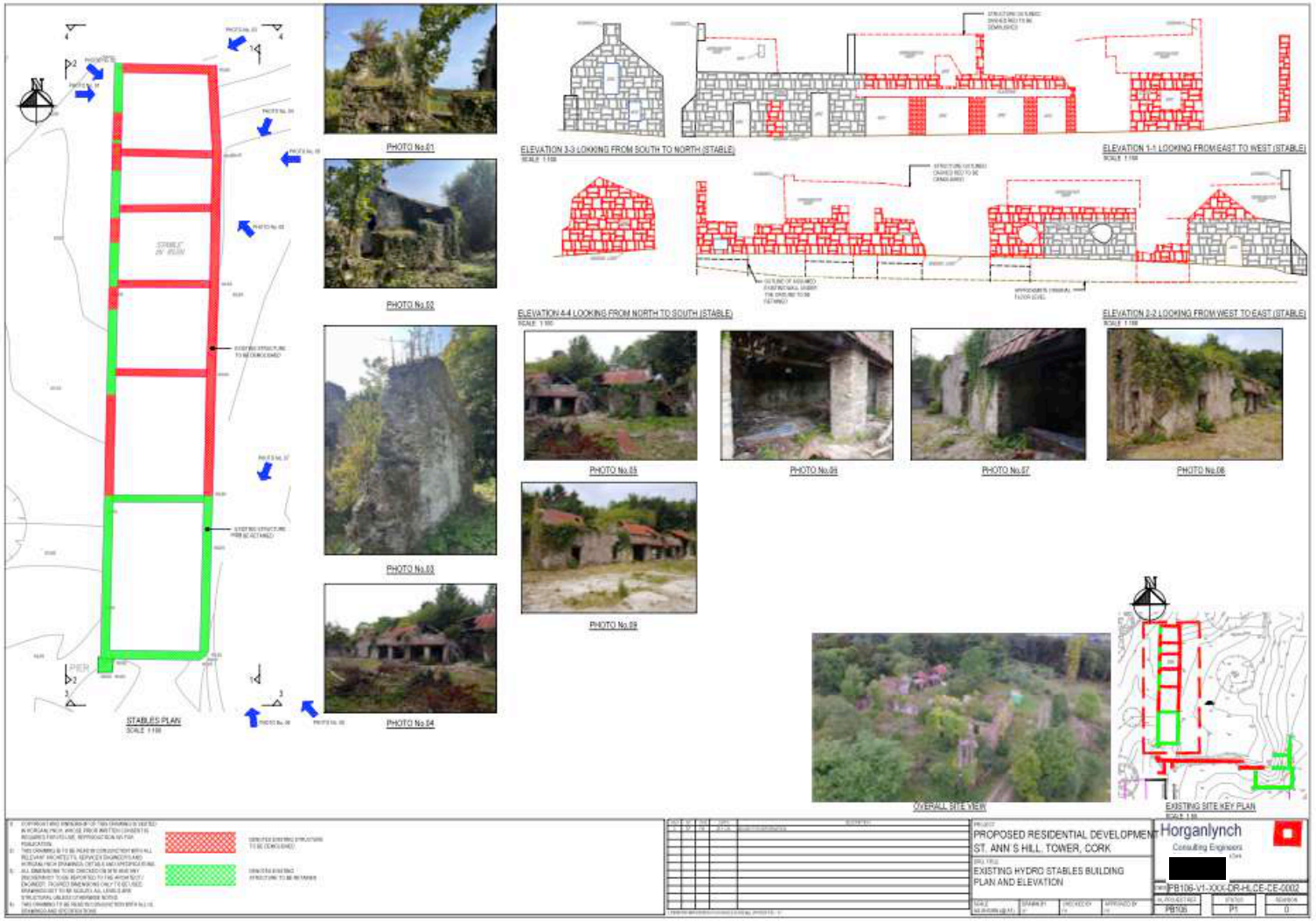

Figure 4. Existing stables building plan and elevation

b) Brown long-eared bat

Brown long-eared bat is an Annex IV bat species under the EU Habitats Directive. The status of this bat species is listed as Least Concern (Favourable). Although they are probably quite common in Ireland, it is difficult to see long-eared bats in flight because they prefer to forage in woodland flying amongst the foliage, picking moths and other insects off leaves. These bats emit their quiet echolocation sounds through their nose. Larger prey items such as noctuid moths are taken to a feeding perch, often in a porch or outhouse. These perches are recognisable by the piles of insect remains, such as moth wings, which collect under them. The long-eared bat roosts in buildings such as houses with large attic spaces, churches, outbuildings and in tree holes.

According to Roche *et al.* 2024, there is a Brown long-eared bat population of approximately 65,000-102,000 individuals in the Republic of Ireland. Modelled population trend indicates that the species has increased annually by 1.5% since the inception of the Brown Long-eared Bat Roost Monitoring Scheme in 2007, although this increase has not been significant.

According to the criteria outlined in Marnell *et. al.* (2022) the conservation significance of the roosts the stables building is "*Small numbers of rarer species. Not a maternity roost".* The Conservation Significance according to Marnell *et. al.* (2022) results determines the bat mitigation measures required. In relation to this species of bat, the mitigation recommended is *"Provision of new roosting facilities where possible. Need not be exactly like-for-like, but should be suitable, based on species requirements. Minimum timing constraints or monitoring requirements".*

Therefore it is considered that the loss of a roost will not impact on the favourable conservation status in their natural range and will not have a detrimental effect on the local bat population of Brown long-eared bat. The provision of the new roosting facilities (bat boxes) follows the guidelines (Marnell *et. al.* (2022).

6. Mitigation measures

The proposed development will involve demolition of the stables building. It is noted that the adjoining coach house building will be refurbished. The coach house currently has no roof and bat roots have not been recorded within this building during any of the site surveys.

6.1 Mitigation during demolition works

During the site works, general mitigation measures for bats will follow the National Road Authority's '*Guidelines for the Treatment of Bats during the Construction of National Road Schemes*' NRA (2005c) and '*Bat mitigation guidelines for Ireland v2'*. Marnell *et al.* 2022). These documents outline the requirements that will be met in the pre-construction (site clearance) stage to minimise negative effects on roosting bats, or prevent avoidable effects resulting from significant alterations to the immediate landscape.

The following mitigation is proposed:

- Prior to the commencement of demolition works, bat boxes will be erected under ecological supervision to provide alternative roosting habitat prior. A large number of mature trees are present onsite and these will be used to house the bat boxes. The

proposed locations of the bat boxes are shown in **Appendix 1**. The locations have been chosen considering both the short-term requirements of bats during construction the longer-term requirement to maintain a viable bat population within the overall site.

• Prior to the commencement of demolition works a repeat survey will be carried out to obtain up to date information on the bat roosting within the site.

• All demolition works of the stables/coach house block will take place outside the bat activity season (i.e. 1st October-31st March). However, works would ideally not commence before October 15th and not after the 1st of March. It is noted that works cannot proceed until a derogation licence has been received. The exact date for the commencement of site works is not known at this time and no works can commence before a supervising ecologist has consulted with the contractor.

• Care must be taken when dismantling or working on the adjoining coach house to ensure that bats are not present.

• All other structures onsite will be examined immediately prior to the commencement of demolition works by a supervising ecologist to ensure there are no signs of bat activity. If bats are discovered during the works process then they will be safely removed by the qualified bat expert and the NPWS will be informed.

No bat roosts were recorded within trees earmarked for removal. Therefore, derogation is not required for tree removal works. However, mitigation measures have been specified in the planning application to ensure there is no direct injury/mortality to any bats which may be present at the time of felling.

6.2 Bat boxes

Given the diversity of bats which use the site, a range of bat boxes have been specified. However, the priority in terms of the derogation application is to provide alternative roosting sites for Whiskered and Brown long-eared bats. The boxes have been selected to provide a range of roosting opportunities for different species and colony sizes. These will be installed on retained mature trees sited on existing trees. The boxes will be installed by the project ecologist considering relevant factors including foraging resources, commuting routes, future landscape development, and lighting and will be regularly checked for usage as part of an ongoing ecological monitoring programme. The following bat boxes (or similar) will be installed as outlined in **Appendix 1**.

Vincent Pro Bat Box

Four Vincent Pro bat boxes will be provided. This box features three vertical chambers of different sizes, providing ideal roosting space for a variety of species. Beneath the crevice entrances is a ladder which provides a rough surface for bats to land. Limited cleaning is required for these boxes as the droppings will fall out of the bottom of the chambers. The front and top of the box are black which helps the box to absorb heat. This bat box can be used by Leisler's, Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, **Brown long-eared**, Natterer's and **Whiskered Bat.**

 Vincent pro bat box	 Improved Roost-Maternity Bat Box
 **Bat Box 1FD**	 **Bat Colony Box 1FS universal**

Improved Roost-Maternity Bat Box

Four improved Roost-Maternity Bat Box will be provided. This box is suitable for larger roosts or maternity groups of the small crevice-dwelling bats such as pipistrelles. This has three separate crevices, each with different temperature characteristics and a wide entrance with accurately sized opening. Ideal for Pipistrelles and deters unwelcome birds etc. Internal ceramic heat sinks ensure improved temperature stability in crevices. Suitable for **Brown Long Eared and Myotis species (including Whiskered Bat).**

Bat Box 1FD

Four Bat Box 1FD will be provided. Suitable for Pipistrelle and Nathusius' Pipistrelle Bats as well as Daubenton's Bats and **Brown long-Eared Bats**. This is especially in mixed bat zones and for initial settlement attempts. The front panel can be removed for inspection and cleaning.

Bat Colony Box 1FS universal

Two Bat Colony Boxes (1FS Universal) will be provided. This type of box is readily used for forming large colonies, by Daubenton's Bats and **Brown Long-Eared Bats**. Nursery roosts with between 70 and 100 animals are common. Thanks to the large interior and the integrated clinging options, for large numbers of individuals, this type of box is very attractive for forming nursery roosts and for rearing young. The box is suitable as a summer and temporary roost.

Bat Box 3FN

Six Bat Box 3FN will be provided. Research by the VWT indicates that **Brown long-eared** roost in this box. It is made to the latest findings and has been used successfully in practice for many years. The intermediate floor ensures that it provides the best possible protection against small predators, draughts and bright light.

With two access options: The Bats can land on the tree trunk and climb in from underneath or fly away directly from the wide entrance area at the front. The roost is largely self-cleaning, as the droppings can fall out of the bottom of the cavity. Nonetheless, checking and cleaning are recommended if the Bat Box is used by large numbers of Bats. This type is especially suitable for forests and parks. The front panel can be removed for inspection and cleaning.

6.3 Lighting

It is noted that bat boxes will not be installed in any area where there is lighting proposed. However, the following mitigation measures will reduced lighting onsite during construction and operation.

The primary mitigation which will be implemented for this project relates to bats, as these are considered the most sensitive species in relation to night time lighting. It is noted that the mitigation proposed will also lessen in the impact in relation other nocturnal species such as Hedgehog. Potentially lighting associated with the site works could cause disturbance/displacement of Bats and other nocturnal wildlife. If of sufficient severity and duration, there could be impacts on reproductive success. Lighting mitigation measures will follow *Bats & Lighting Guidance Notes for: Planners, engineers, architects and developers* (Bat Conservation Ireland, 2010). The following measures will be applied in relation to construction and operational lighting:

6.3.1 Lighting during construction

Site lighting will typically be provided by tower mounted temporary portable construction floodlights. The floodlights will be cowled and angled downwards to minimise spillage to surrounding properties. The following measures will be applied in relation to site lighting:

- Lighting will be provided with the minimum luminosity sufficient for safety and security purposes.
- Lights will be switched off when not in use; and
- Lighting will be positioned and directed so that it does not to unnecessarily intrude on adjacent ecological receptors and structures used by protected species...

- Works will primarily take place during hours of daylight to minimise disturbance to any nocturnal mammal species.

6.3.2 Lighting During Operation

The lighting scheme has taken into account best practice, as published by the UK Bat Conservation Trust, in respect of mitigation strategies, to minimise the impact of outdoor lighting upon bat populations.

- LED type lanterns, of the Warm White type will be utilised where possible. Colour Temperature of 3,000 kelvin, as is considered least disruptive to the emergence of bats from roosts at dusk, and subsequent movement from habitats to foraging locations.
- Lanterns are of the fully cut off type with no light output above the horizontal plane.
- Height of columns kept as low as possible taking cognisance of need to make lanterns vandal resistant
- Lighting will be faced away from the retained boundary habitats to minimise the impact on bats foraging along these areas. The positioning of lighting l along eastern treeline will be carried out in consultation with a supervising ecologist.
- Timers and/sensors should be used where possible.

7. Monitoring

Monitoring will be carried out post-construction works for 2 years after the demolition works. Monitoring will involve a summer survey to determine the level of bat usage of newly installed bat boxes.

Note bat boxes will be installed prior to any demolition works.

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Aughney, T., Roche, N. and Langton, S. (2022) Irish Bat Monitoring Programme 2018-2021. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 137. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Ireland.

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Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4thedn).

Fossitt J A (2000) A Guide to Habitats in Ireland. The Heritage Council, Kilkenny

Lundy MG, Aughney T, Montgomery WI, Roche N (2011) Landscape conservation for Irish bats & species specific roosting characteristics. Bat Conservation Ireland.

Marnell, F., Kelleher, C. & Mullen, E. (2022) Bat mitigation guidelines for Ireland v2. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 134. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Ireland

O'Donnell Environmental 2024. Bat Conservation Report Cork City Lesser Horseshoe Bat Project. Prepared for Cork City Council and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Roche, N. & Langton, S. (2024) Population estimates, trends and background information for six Irish bat species. Article 17 reporting 2018-2023: Supporting document. Unpublished report to National Parks & Wildlife Service.

Appendix 1. Location of bat boxes

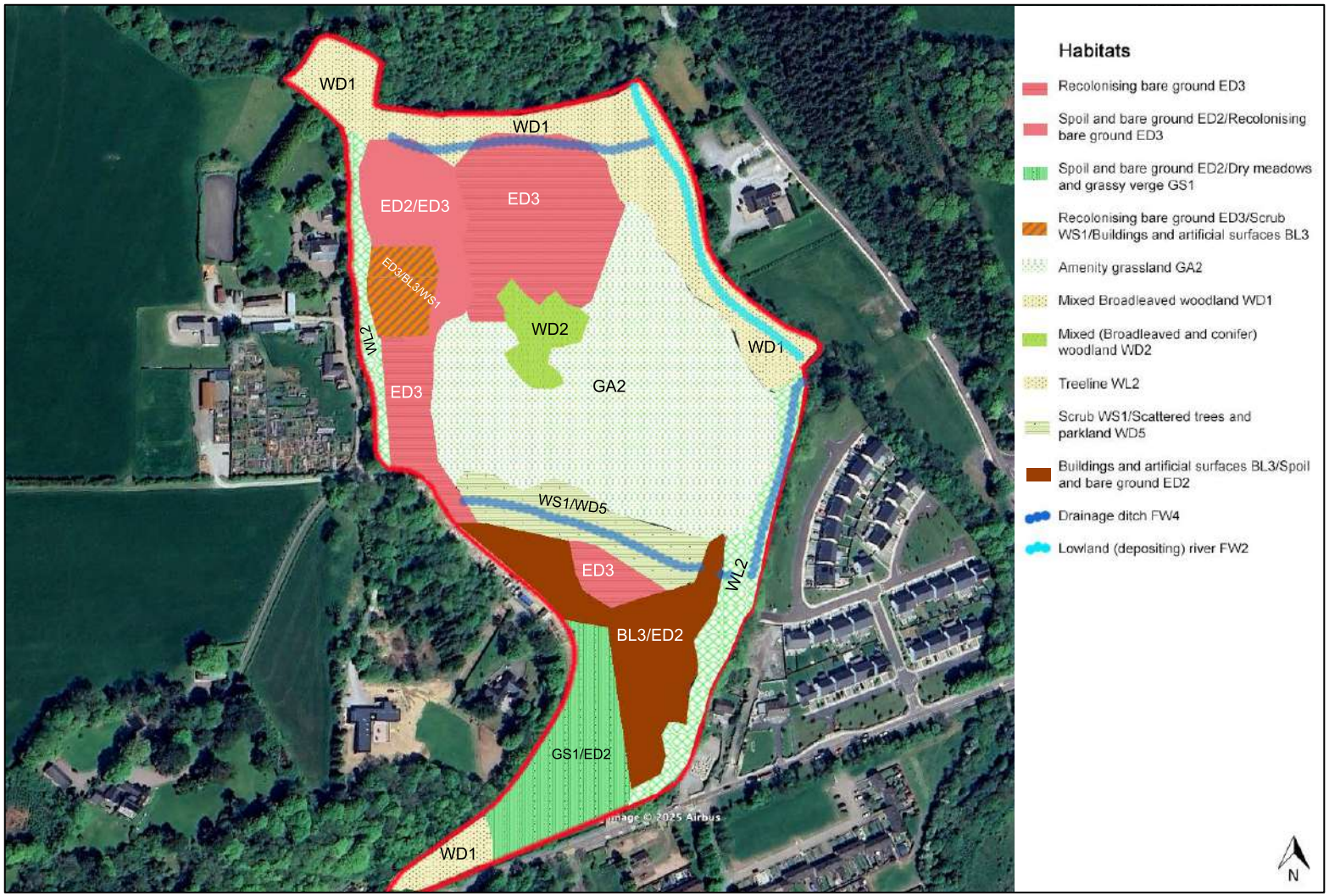

Figure 5. Habitats recorded within propose development site (Stables in BL3 habitat at northwest of site)