

Bat Derogation Licence Supporting Document

Student Accommodation
at Coolagh Rd, Galway, Co.
Galway





DOCUMENT DETAILS

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2. INTRODUCTION

This report provides information in support of an application for a derogation under Regulation 54 & 4A of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended. This application is specifically for:

- The destruction of resting (not breeding) place of a small roost (1 individual) of soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*).

This document provides the necessary information to assess the application, in line with guidance provided by the NPWS and the European Commission. Two derogation licences for the same works have been obtained in 2024 (DER-BAT-2024-187) and 2025 (DER-BAT-2025-29) and returned as NIL, as no works had been started. This application related to the 2026 calendar year.

2.1 Objective of the Proposed Works

The site comprises three structures located on a large urban site. Planning permission has been granted for new residential development. The proposed development comprises 84 no. apartments 586 no. student bedspaces on a greenfield site along the Coolough Road in the north of the city. The proposal would assist in meeting the demand for student accommodation in Galway City over the coming years.

There is an identified need to add significant additional student accommodation to the existing student accommodation in Galway City to serve the city's three third level institutes: University of Galway, the Atlantic Technological University (ATU) and Galway Technical Institute (GTI). It is expected that the student population will continue to increase over the coming years with CSO projections indicating the 20-24 years cohort will grow to 342,400 by 2026 and 387,000 by 2036. It is forecast that Galway's 20-24 age group will increase by 2,100 by 2026. There is clear recognition that student reliance on the private rental market impacts the availability and supply for mainstream and social housing needs. Therefore, there is an urgent need to meet student accommodation demand through the provision of purpose-built student accommodation. The continued demand for student accommodation is recognised in the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 with the stated aim of supporting the provision of new student accommodation in appropriate locations.

A small bat roost was found hosting one bat within the development site, however a licence is requested to demolish the buildings and effectively remove the roosting place identified. The resting place identified was in use by a single individual. The loss of this roost is not expected to affect the conservation status of the species and compensation has been included in the design to retain roosting availability suitable to soprano pipistrelle bats within the site.

2.2 Statement of Authority

This document has been prepared by Bea Jackson (B.A., M.Sc.) and Nora Szijarto (B.Sc., M.Sc.) of MKO. Bea is an Ecologist with over 2 years' professional consultancy experience. Nora is an Ecologist with three years' professional consultancy experience. This application has been reviewed by Sara Fissolo (B.Sc.) of MKO. Sara is an Ecologist with over six years' professional consultancy experience. Other relevant ecological staff are Aoife Joyce (B.Sc., M.Sc., MCIEEM), Clare Misfud (B.Sc., M.Sc., Ph.D), and Saoirse Fitzsimons (B.Sc., M.Sc.). Aoife Joyce is a Project Director (Ecology) with 6 years' professional experience. Saoirse Fitzsimons is a Bat Ecologist with 4 years' professional consultancy experience. Clare Misfud is a Bat Ecologist with 1 years' professional consultancy experience, and 12 years experience in bat research and conservation.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Proposed Activity

Permission has been granted for an LRD development which consists of:

- Demolition of 2 no. existing dwellings and ancillary structures located centrally within the site and demolition of the partial building ruins located in the south-eastern portion of the site.
- Construction of a student accommodation scheme comprising 84 no. apts
- The proposed accommodation scheme is arranged in 7 no. blocks which vary in height from part 2 storey/3 storey building to 4 storey with a 5 storey set back on block d.
- Provision of communal facilities on the ground floor of block a including a retail space measuring 77sqm and a café measuring 81.7sqm, with associated signage
- Provision of communal open space and outdoor recreational areas internal and external (visitor) bicycle, refuse storage, car parking, public lighting, wayfinding signage and photovoltaic panels,
- The provision of hard and soft landscaping and boundary treatments including an elevated mesh walkway (82 metres) and a bridge spanning the limestone pavement in the north western portion of the site
- Provision of vehicular entrance and 2 no. pedestrian/cyclist entrances from the Coolough Road and the provision of a toucan pedestrian crossing on the Coolough Road
- Road improvement works along the Dyke Road
- The proposed scheme will be utilised for short term visitor letting during the summer months
- Provision of associated surface water, watermain and foul water drainage services and connections, ESB substation and all associated site works and ancillary services

A derogation licence for the development has been obtained prior to planning and has since expired.

3.2 Location

The Development site is located on the western side of the Coolough Road in the townland of Coolough, approximately 2km north of Galway City Centre. The site is access via the Coolagh Road.

3.3 Ownership

The applicant, McHugh Property Holdings Limited, purchased the site from the previous landowners, Denis C. Higgins and Kathleen Connell, following the grant of planning permission.

3.4 Reason for Activity

A small bat roost was found hosting one bat (soprano pipistrelle, *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) within the development site. A licence is requested to demolish the buildings and effectively remove the roosting place identified. The resting place identified was in use by a single individual. The loss of this roost is not expected to affect the conservation status of the species and compensation has been included in the design to retain roosting availability suitable to soprano pipistrelle bats within the site

There is an identified need to add significant additional student accommodation to the existing student accommodation in Galway City to serve the city's three third level institutes: University of Galway, the Atlantic Technological University (ATU) and Galway Technical Institute (GTI). It is expected that the student population will continue to increase over the coming years with CSO projections indicating the 20-24 years cohort will grow to 342,400 by 2026 and 387,000 by 2036. It is forecast that Galway's 20-24 age group will increase by 2,100 by 2026. There is clear recognition that student reliance on the private

rental market impacts the availability and supply for mainstream and social housing needs. Therefore, there is an urgent need to meet student accommodation demand through the provision of purpose-built student accommodation. The continued demand for student accommodation is recognised in the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 with the stated aim of supporting the provision of new student accommodation in appropriate locations.

3.5 Planning History

The site consists of 2 no. houses, and a greenfield area. The site is zoned 'R' Residential with a stated objective 'to provide for residential development and for associated support development, which will ensure the protection of existing residential amenity and will contribute to sustainable residential neighbourhoods' under the current Galway City Council Development Plan (2023-2029).

There is no prior relevant planning history of the site. Planning permission was granted for the development on 8th April 2025, subject to 26 conditions. An appeal was made to An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) on 1st May 2025. The decision was made by ACP to grant permission with revised conditions. Bat Derogation Licence number DER-BAT-2025-29 was registered with the NPWS and related to the demolition works relating to the appeal site, but expired on 31st March 2025.

4.

PROPOSED WORKS

Planning permission has been granted for a Large-Scale Residential Development on a site located to the west of the Coolough Road (L-1005) in the townland of Coolagh (also known as Coolough), Co. Galway, in addition to road improvement works located on the Dyke Road (L-1004) located in the townland of Terryland, Co. Galway.

The development is consistent with the objectives of the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029.

The site comprises three structures located on a large urban site. Planning permission has been granted for new residential development. A small bat roost was found hosting one soprano pipistrelle bat, however a licence is requested to demolish the buildings and effectively remove the roosting place identified.

Bat Derogation Licence number DER-BAT-2025-29 was registered with the NPWS and related to the demolition works relating to the development, but expired on 31st March 2025. A new derogation licence is being sought in relation to these works.

Demolition works will be undertaken outside the bat maternity season (i.e. May to August). Prior to the commencement of any demolition works, a suitably qualified ecologist will provide a toolbox talk to site staff to make them aware of the ecological sensitivities of the site and ensure that they are fully briefed in relation to any bat constraints. A pre-commencement survey will be carried out by a licenced ecologist, to identify any potential changes in the baseline since these surveys were undertaken in June 2024. This will include the inspection of all structures proposed for demolition (Figure 4-1).

Alternative roost sites will be provided to compensate for the loss of roosting habitat. Bat boxes will be erected within the Proposed Development site following best practice guidelines (Marnell et al., 2022; NRA 2006). A minimum of 4 no. woodcrete bat boxes are recommended for installation. Bat boxes should have a southerly orientation and be positioned at least 3m from the ground, away from artificial lighting from the operational phase of the development. They will be placed adjacent to vegetation features such as treelines and hedgerows to ensure they are close to existing flight paths and can avoid wide open spaces (Collins, 2023). Final bat box locations will be agreed in consultation with a licenced Ecologist. Integrated bat boxes can be considered in the construction of the residential development.

At least one no. bat box will be placed onsite before works commence to allow for relocation of bats potentially found during the works. A Schwegler 2FN Woodcrete bat box, or similar, is recommended for this purpose.

The lighting plan for the operational phase of the proposed development is designed with consideration of the following guidelines: Bat Conservation Ireland guidelines; Bat Conservation Ireland (Bats and Lighting: Guidance Notes for Planners, Engineers, Architects and Developers, BCI, 2010) and the Bat Conservation Trust (Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night (BCT, 2023), to minimise light spillage, thus reducing any potential disturbance to bats. Landscaping plans favourable to bats are designed and involve the retention and enhancement of linear features and/or woodland habitats, where possible.



IMPORTANT NOTE:
 All dimensions to be checked on site. Any discrepancies between site and figured dimensions to be brought immediately to the architect's attention and confirmed prior to construction. The information contained in this drawing is not exhaustive. All works to be carried out in compliance with the current Building Regulations. If in doubt please contact the architect for clarification or further information prior to construction.
 This drawing should be read in conjunction with the relevant consultants' drawings. Refer to consulting engineer's drawings for structural design and specification. Refer to architect's drawings for all setting out and detailed design. Any inconsistencies between structural and architectural drawings to be brought immediately to the architect's attention and confirmed prior to construction.
 Any deviation from the design or specification to be brought immediately to the architect's attention and confirmed prior to construction. All products to be installed in strict accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. All subcontractors to confirm site dimensions with the main contractor prior to manufacture. Subcontractors to supply fabrication drawings to the architect for approval or comment prior to manufacture.

SURVEYED BY:

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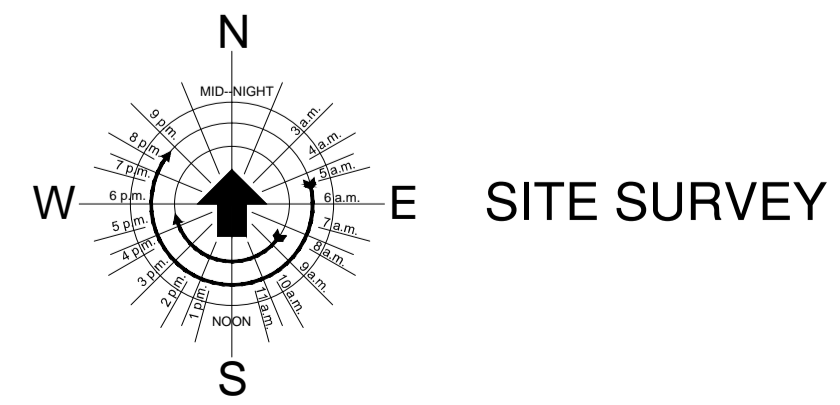
PROJECT NUMBER: RG23056 **SHEET NO:** 00

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NOTE:
 SEE DRAWING S-002 FOR FULL DETAILS OF EXISTING DWELLINGS TO BE DEMOLISHED

PART OF FRONT BOUNDARY WALL TO BE DEMOLISHED AND USABLE STONE SALVAGED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW BOUNDARY WALL TO MATCH EXISTING. SEE DRAWING 4432 P-030 FOR FULL BOUNDARY DETAILS

LEGEND:
 ——— = OUTLINE OF APPLICATION SITE BOUNDARY
 - - - - - = PROPOSED DEMOLITIONS



REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DWN
B	23/08/24	Red line revised to include pedestrian crossing	HR
A	25/07/24	Red Boundary Line & distance to boundaries added	JK

THIS DRAWING IS PRODUCED FOR PLANNING PERMISSION PURPOSES ONLY

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CLIENT: MCHUGH PROPERTY HOLDINGS LTD.
 PROJECT: STUDENT ACCOMMODATION AT COOLOUGH ROAD
 DRAWING: SITE DEMOLITIONS PLAN

DATE	SCALE & SHEET SIZE	DRAWN	PROJECT NO.	DRG No.	REVISION
JUL 2024	1:500 @ A1	KQ	4432	P- 020	B

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5. ECOLOGICAL SURVEYS AND SITE ASSESSMENT

5.1 Pre-existing Information

A data request was also sent to the NPWS and data received in relation to the relevant 10km grid square in which the Development site is situated (M22) on the 17/01/2024. The National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) was searched for records of flora and fauna for hectad M22 on 07/03/2024. Reports prepared for the Galway City Transport Project (GCTP, 2015) and the Galway City Ring Road EIAR (GCRR, 2018) were also reviewed. These results are summarised in Table 5-1 below.

Table 5-1 lists the bat species recorded within hectad M22

Table 5-1: Desktop study records for bat species within the vicinity of the development

Common Name	Scientific Name	Protection	Data Source
Leisler's Bat	<i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>	WA, Annex IV	NBDC; GCTP (2015)
Daubenton's Bat	<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	WA, Annex IV	NBDC; GCTP (2015)
Natterer's Bat	<i>Myotis nattereri</i>	WA, Annex IV	NBDC
Brown Long-eared Bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	WA, Annex IV	NBDC; GCTP (2015)
Nathusius' pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>	WA, Annex IV	GCTP (2015)
Common Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	WA, Annex IV	GCTP (2015)
Soprano Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	WA, Annex IV	NBDC; GCTP (2015)
Lesser horseshoe bat	<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	WA, Annex II, Annex IV	NBDC; NPWS; GCTP (2015); GCRR (2018)

5.2 Status of species in local/regional area

Table 5-2 lists the status and threats of the species known to occur in the local area. Soprano pipistrelle bats, associated with the roost identified, have a favourable conservation status. The population of this species has been increasing significantly and steadily. On this basis, and given the widespread distribution and very large population present in the country, no threats or pressures are considered to be significant at this point.

Table 5-2 Irish Bat Species Conservation Status and Threats (NPWS, 2025). Pressures and Threats are ranked from medium importance (M) to high importance (H) in the 2025 Article 17 report.

Bat Species	Conservation Status	Principal Threats
Leisler's Bat <i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>	Favourable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > D01 Wind, wave and tidal power (including infrastructure) (L) > F02 Construction or modification (e.g. of housing and settlements) in existing builtup areas (L)
Daubenton's Bat <i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	Favourable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > A22 Drainage for use as agricultural land (M)

Bat Species	Conservation Status	Principal Threats
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ F12 Residential, commercial and industrial activities and structures generating noise, light, heat or other forms of pollution (M)
Natterer's Bat <i>Myotis nattereri</i>	Favourable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A04 Removal of small landscape features for agricultural land parcel consolidation (hedges, stone walls, rushes, open ditches, springs, solitary trees, etc.) (L) ➤ B09 Clear-cutting, removal of all trees (L) ➤ E01 Roads, paths, railroads and related infrastructure (L) ➤ F01 Conversion from other land uses to built-up areas (L) ➤ F02 Construction or modification (e.g. of housing and settlements) in existing builtup areas (L)
Brown Long-eared Bat <i>Plecotus auritus</i>	Favourable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ X04 No pressures or threats
Nathusius' pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>	Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ D01 Wind, wave and tidal power (including infrastructure). It is not clear what pressures or threats may impact on this species in the Republic of Ireland. Elsewhere in its European range, mortalities at wind farms are a significant concern, particularly during the periods of migration. For now, no pressures are considered significant and only wind farms are listed as a potential threat.
Common Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Favourable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ X04 No pressures or threats to Common pipistrelle are considered significant at this point
Soprano Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	Favourable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ X04 No pressures or threats. The population of this species has been increasing significantly and steadily. On this basis, and given the widespread distribution and very large population present in the country, no threats or pressures are considered to be significant at this point.
Lesser horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A04 Removal of small landscape features for agricultural land parcel consolidation (M) ➤ A15 Use of other pest control methods in agriculture (M) ➤ B09 Clear-cutting, removal of all trees (M) ➤ E01 Roads, paths, railroads and related infrastructure (M) ➤ F01 Conversion from other land uses to built-up areas (M) ➤ F02 Construction or modification (e.g. of housing and settlements) in existing built-up areas (M) ➤ F13 Drainage, land reclamation and conversion of wetlands, marshes, bogs, etc. for built-up areas (L) ➤ H04 Vandalism or arson (incl. humanintroduced wild fire) (L) ➤ J01 Temperature changes and extremes due to climate change (L) ➤ M07 Natural processes without direct or indirect influence from human activities or climate change (L)

5.3 Survey Objective

A suite of bat surveys (i.e. roost inspection survey, dusk emergence survey and static detector survey) were undertaken within the development site to inform the ecological impact assessment prepared as part of the planning application for the site (Galway City Council planning reference number 2460348; ACP Case Number 322424). The aim of the surveys was to determine the presence of roosting bats, and to characterise the use of the site by bats, and inform whether there was a need for further survey work or mitigation.

5.4 Description of Survey Area

The survey area for the roost inspection survey and the dusk emergence survey encompassed the three-story house, bungalow and derelict stone structure that are to be demolished as part of the development. Bat static detectors were deployed within the development site in two areas to sample a range of habitats present within the site, including favourable bat habitats.

5.5 Survey Methodology

A roost inspection survey dusk emergence survey and static detector survey were carried out at the development site. The location of these surveys is illustrated in Figure 5-1.

5.5.1 Roost Survey

A search for roosts was undertaken within the proposed site. The aim was to determine the presence of roosting bats and the need for further survey work or mitigation. A walkover was carried out and the structures were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats. This comprised a detailed inspection of the exterior and interior to look for evidence of bat use, including live and dead specimens, droppings, feeding remains, urine splashes, fur oil staining and noises.

The exteriors of the three structures were inspected first from ground level, with the aid of binoculars. A systematic search of all accessible internal and external areas was undertaken by a licensed bat ecologist.

5.5.2 Dusk Emergence Survey

A dusk emergence survey was undertaken during the evening of the 1st May 2024 and 4th June 2024. Four surveyors were present on both emergence surveys. The aim of this survey was to identify bat species using the site and to gather any information on bat behaviour and important features used by bats. The activity survey focused on the three-story house, bungalow and derelict stone structure that are proposed to be demolished. Bat activity was also monitored throughout the proposed site.

Surveyors were equipped with active full spectrum bat detectors, Batlogger M (Elekon AG, Lucerne, Switzerland). Surveyors were positioned surrounding the three buildings with a clear view of the entire structures and associated linear features and habitats. Where possible, species identification was made in the field and any other relevant information was also noted, e.g. numbers, behaviour, features used, etc. The dusk survey commenced 15 minutes before sunset and was completed within 2 hours after sunset. Conditions were suitable for bat survey with no wind, dry, cloudless and mild weather

Table 5-3 Bat Activity survey effort

Date	Type	Sunset	Weather
1 st May 2024	Roost Emergence	21:06	11 - 15 °C, Dry, Calm
4 th June 2024	Roost Emergence	21:57	8 - 12 °C, Dry, Calm

Survey design and effort was created in accordance with the most current best practice guidelines for surveying bats (Collins, 2023). Bats use different roosts, commuting routes and foraging areas throughout their annual life cycle and depending on the availability of insect prey. Therefore, all surveys are subject to seasonal and meteorological constraints. May and June are within the optimum survey period for bat activity surveys (Collins, 2023). No limitations associated with access or weather conditions were recorded during the surveys.

5.5.3 Static Detectors Surveys

Two full spectrum SM4 bat detectors (Wildlife Acoustics, Maynard, MA, USA), were deployed during static surveys to record bat activity in May, June, July, August, September and October 2024. Consistency with previous surveys undertaken at the site was maintained for these additional surveys, with the locations of static detectors selected to represent a range of habitats present within the site, including favourable bat habitats. Deployment details are presented in Table 5-4.

Table 5-4 Bat Static Detector survey effort

Month	D01 IG Reference	D02 IG Reference	Deployment Date	Collection Date
May	M 29820 27266	M 29841 27189	01/05/2024	20/05/2024
June	M 29820 27266	M 29841 27189	21/06/2024	28/06/2024
July	M 29820 27266	M 29841 27189	22/07/2024	29/07/2024
August	M 29820 27266	M 29841 27189	21/08/2024	29/08/2024
September	M 29820 27266	M 29841 27189	23/09/2024	30/09/2024
October	M 29820 27266	M 29841 27189	01/10/2024	07/10/2024






Settings used were those recommended by the manufacturer for bats, with minor adjustments in gain settings and band pass filters to reduce background noise when recording. Detectors were set to record from 30 minutes before sunset until 30 minutes after sunrise. The Song Meter automatically adjusts sunset and sunrise times using the Solar Calculation Method when provided with GPS coordinates.

All recordings were later analysed using bat call analysis software Kaleidoscope Pro v.5.6.8 (Wildlife Acoustics, MA, USA). The aim of this was to identify, to a species or genus level, what bats were present at the proposed development site. Bat species were identified using established call parameters, to create site-specific custom classifiers. All identified calls were also manually verified.

Individual bats of the same species cannot be distinguished by their echolocation alone. Thus, ‘bat passes’ was used as a measure of activity (Collins, 2023). A bat pass was defined as a recording of an individual species/species group’s echolocation containing at least two echolocation pulses and of maximum 15s duration. All bat passes recorded in the course of this study follow these criteria, allowing comparison.



Map Legend

-  Detector Locations
-  Structures Inspected
26.02.2024
-  Surveyor Locations
Emergence 1
-  Surveyor Locations
Emergence 2
-  Site Boundary



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Drawing Title

Bat Survey Effort

Project Title
Student Accommodation at Coolagh Rd,
Galway, Co. Galway

Drawn By	Checked By
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Project No.	Drawing No.
231014	Figure 5-1
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5.6 Survey Results

5.6.1 Roost Survey

The daytime inspection surveys were carried out on 26th February 2024. The proposed development site includes two houses, a three-story house with large garden and a bungalow with a small shed located to the back that functions as both a utility and boiler room. A third structure, a derelict stone shed, is located west of these buildings and a green field consisting of scrub and limestone pavement is located to the north of the buildings. The bungalow and its garden are surrounded by stone wall, with a mature treeline growing between the two residential properties. This provides connectivity with surrounding habitats.

External and internal inspections were performed on all structures, which are proposed to be demolished. Limited roosting suitability was found. No potential for hibernacula was identified and no potential access points for lesser horseshoe bats were identified. Table 5-5 provides the inspection results.

Table 5-5. Inspection Result Summary 26th February 2024.

Building	IG	Section	Notes	Suitability	Survey Results	Plates
Three story house; <i>Internal Sections</i>	M 29900 27218	Attic Section A	No access points found. Could be hidden behind the ceiling plastic sheeting.	Low	A small number of bat dropping found - not recent.	Plates 5-1 and 5-2
		Attic Section B	No access points found. Water tank present but inaccessible	Low	A small number of bat dropping found beside the attic entrance – not recent	Plates 5-3 and 5-4
		Attic Section C	No access points found. Holes in the felt allowed access to Attic Section D.	None	No evidence of bats.	n/a
		Attic Section D	No access points found.	None	No evidence of bats.	n/a
Three story house; <i>External Sections</i>	M 29900 27218	Roof	One hole found in South Facing fascia board, otherwise in perfect condition.	Low	No evidence of bats.	n/a
		A - House Exterior	Stone cladding under front door with small cavity. External Feature Stone waterfall; small crevice in stone wall and mortar	Low	No evidence of bats.	Plate 5-5 and 5-6
		B - Garage	Sealed well garage located in basement of property, small cracks visible above garage door, which a bat could access.	Negligible	No evidence of bats.	n/a

		C - Boiler Room	No access points found. Grill on door vent impeding access.	None	No evidence of bats.	n/a
Bungalow	M 29886 27180	Single Open Attic	Gutters and roof with three small gaps, east facing front of house and western aspect. Potential access through gap in slate	Low	A Small number of bat droppings – not recent	Plate 5-7 and 5-8
		External shed	Gaps and crevices, large amount of cobwebs present.	Negligible	No evidence of bats	n/a
Stone Ruins	M29879 27117	Building ruins to the south of the two main buildings.	Many crevices in stone wall and mortar. Area is surrounded by rough scrub and grassland	Low	Endoscoped. No evidence of bats but suitable for use.	Plate 5-9 and 5-10



Plate 5-1. Three storey House: Attic storage area with plastic sealed ceiling and felt.



Plate 5-2 Three storey House: Small number of bat droppings found throughout the attic space.



Plate 5-3 Three storey House: Attic space Section B and water tank – not accessed.



Plate 5-4 Three storey House: Bat dropping found at the attic entrance.



Plate 5-5 Three storey House: Front porch with air vent allowing light into the roof space.



Plate 5-6 Three storey House: Small hole and crevice to the rear external wall.



Plate 5-7 Bungalow for demolition with single attic space and two chimneys.



Plate 5-8 Southern aspect soffit with one hole.



Plate 5-9 Stone House ruins in 2024 and conifer treeline to the west.



Plate 5-10 Stone House ruins in 2009, with no linear features present (source Google maps)

5.6.2 Emergence Surveys

A presence/absence survey was undertaken in the form of a dusk emergence survey on the evenings of the 1st May and 4th June 2024. Surveyors were positioned to achieve the best coverage of the three structures on the site to monitor potential access points and stone walls. One surveyor was equipped with thermal camera to aid the survey work. Table 5-6 summarises survey results.

Table 5-6 Bat emergence surveys

PRF Structure	Survey Date	Results
Three Story House	01/05/2024 04/06/2024	One roost identified; Soprano pipistrelle bat recorded emerging from hole in fascia board 04/06/2024.
Bungalow	01/05/2024 04/06/2024	No roost identified. Bats recorded crossing road toward the conifer treeline to commute to scrub.
Stone ruins to the West.	01/05/2024 04/06/2024	No roost identified. Bats using conifer trees and stone building to commute past.

Bat Activity Survey 1st May 2024

No bats were observed emerging from any structure. Bats were recorded commuting from across the road past the three structures toward the limestone pavement, scrub and treelines south of the site to a foraging habitat. Bats were also recorded foraging over the stone ruins, and the trees south of the three-story house. Soprano pipistrelle, common pipistrelles, Leisler’s bat and Brown long-eared bats were observed. A small number of bats were recorded foraging along the trees.

Bat Activity Survey 4th June 2024

One bat was observed emerging from the hole in the fascia board on the three-story house. A small number of bats were recorded commuting across the road past the three structures and foraging over the treeline and scrub. Bat species were also recorded foraging on the treeline south of the three-story house. Soprano pipistrelle, common pipistrelles and Leisler’s bat were observed.

5.6.3 Static Detector Surveys

5.6.3.1.1 Initial Static Detector Surveys (May 2024)

In total 5,715 bat passes were recorded. Analysis of the detector recordings positively identified seven bat species. Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) made up the vast majority of the activity recorded within the site (n=3,976) followed by Leisler’s bats (*Nyctalus leisleri*) (n=733) and common pipistrelles (n=672). Brown long-eared bats (n=110) and Nathusius’ pipistrelles (n=177) and were less frequently recorded, followed by *and Myotis* spp. (n=22). 25 instances of lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) were recorded at the site.

Menlo Castle is located 1.5km from the Proposed Development site and is known as a roosting site for Lesser horseshoe bats. The Proposed Development site is therefore located within the current known foraging range (2.5km) for this bat species. Plate 5-11 shows total bat species composition recorded at the site. Species composition was similar at both detectors, with bats commuting past, with feeding calls also shown. The lesser horseshoe bat passes were recorded at both locations commuting past early in the night, and past the detector a few hours later.

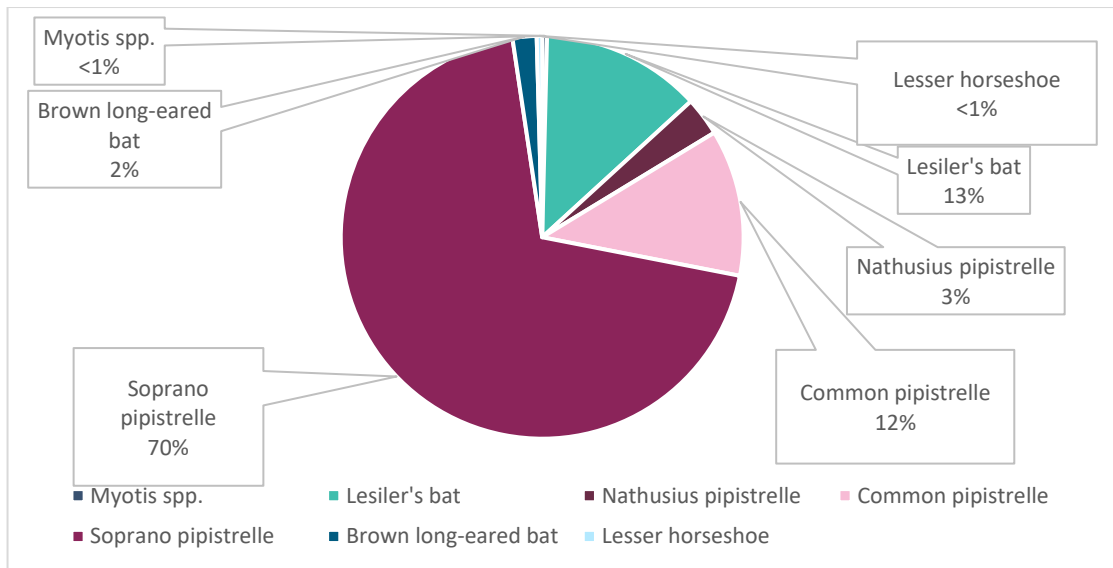


Plate 5-11 Total bat species composition.

5.6.3.1.2 Additional Static Detector Surveys

In total 9,767 bat passes were recorded. Analysis of the detector recordings positively identified six bats to species level with *Myotis* genus also present. As for the surveys carried out in May 2024, Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) made up the vast majority of the activity recorded within the site (n=7,846). These were followed by Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, n=1200) and Leisler's bats (*Nyctalus leisleri*, n=571). These are widespread species across Ireland and are generally more associated with urban environments than other species. Brown long-eared bats (n=14) and Nathusius' pipistrelles (n=46) and *Myotis* spp. (n=38) were less frequently recorded, in line with previous data collected. 52no. instances of lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) were recorded at the site. Table 5-7 shows the data collected each month at each detector.

Table 5-7 Additional Static survey results – Total Bat Passes

Month	Location	<i>Myotis</i> sp.	Leisler's bat	Nathusius' pipistrelle	Common pipistrelle	Soprano pipistrelle	Brown long-eared bat	Lesser horseshoe bat
June	D01	1	91	6	183	427	-	-
	D02	-	45	2	193	505	1	1
July	D01	7	60	10	353	372	1	4
	D02	7	87	13	185	1292	1	2
August	D01	-	27	-	63	151	-	5
	D02	-	30	-	61	3148	-	5
September	D01	5	114	8	31	254	4	12
	D02	13	91	3	78	1080	4	17
October	D01	5	12	2	19	128	1	1
	D02	-	14	2	34	489	2	5

> Both detectors recorded regular activity across the deployments, with limited variation recorded between months at the two detectors. A notable exception is the high soprano pipistrelle activity recorded at D02 in July, August and September compared to D01. Social calls were also recorded. A roost for this species was identified within the site, and the site was confirmed to provide suitable foraging habitat, particularly along its western section. D02 was located in proximity of the western treeline which borders the site and generally recorded higher activity than D01, located in a more open habitat characterised by scrub to the north of the site. Lesser horseshoe bats were recorded in low numbers, with September recording the highest number of calls for this species. Due to

their low echolocation calls, it is likely that calls from the species were missed, however the static surveys provide important information on their use of the site as a commuting corridor.

5.6.4 Summary of Bat Survey Results and Overall Findings

- 1 no. soprano pipistrelle bat emerging from the three-story house (likely in fascia board).
- At least seven bat species were recorded commuting and foraging across the site during the bat surveys carried out in May and June 2024, including soprano pipistrelle, common pipistrelle, Leisler's bat, brown long-eared bat, Nathusius' pipistrelle, *Myotis spp.*, and lesser horseshoe bat.
- The three buildings surveyed have the potential to support bat roosts during the activity season. However, very limited evidence was identified during the surveys. No evidence of hibernacula were identified. Small accumulations of old droppings were found within the two residential structures. However, no fresh droppings or dropping accumulations indicative of large active roosts were found.
- No suitable access points into the structures for use by lesser horseshoe bats were identified.
- The site supports a diverse local bat population. The habitats identified on site, and particularly treelines located to the west of the site, were initially assessed as having Low suitability, As they were confirmed during activity surveys as valuable habitats for local bats, the assessment was raised to Moderate.

5.7 Population size and class assessment

The subject site hosts a small population of roosting soprano pipistrelles and supports other bat populations of local importance. Based on the information identified within the desk study, and during dedicated surveys undertaken, the site is used by local bat populations for foraging, commuting and roosting. As such, bat species have been identified as of Local Importance (Higher Value).

6. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE DEROGATION TESTS

The NPWS document, *Guidance on the Strict Protection of Certain Animal and Plant Species under the Habitats Directive in Ireland* - National Parks and Wildlife Service Guidance Series 1 (2021), was reviewed before undertaking this derogation application.

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:

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 a population(s) at a favourable conservation status.

It is believed that the pre-conditions for granting a derogation licence have been met, as follows:

6.1 Test 1 – Reasons for Seeking Derogation

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 reasons apply:

(c) In the interest 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.

The site comprises three structures located on a large urban site. Planning permission has been granted for new residential development. A small bat roost was found hosting one bat, however a licence is requested to demolish the buildings and effectively remove the roosting place identified.

There is an identified need to add significant additional student accommodation to the existing student accommodation in Galway City to serve the city's three third level institutes: University of Galway, the Atlantic Technological University (ATU) and Galway Technical Institute (GTI). It is expected that the student population will continue to increase over the coming years with CSO projections indicating the 20-24 years cohort will grow to 342,400 by 2026 and 387,000 by 2036. It is forecast that Galway's 20-24 age group will increase by 2,100 by 2026. There is clear recognition that student reliance on the private rental market impacts the availability and supply for mainstream and social housing needs. Therefore, there is an urgent need to meet student accommodation demand through the provision of purpose-built student accommodation. The continued demand for student accommodation is recognised in the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 with the stated aim of supporting the provision of new student accommodation in appropriate locations.

The proposed development comprises 84 no. apartments 586 no. student bedspaces on a greenfield site along the Coolough Road in the north of the city. The proposal would assist in meeting the demand for student accommodation in Galway City over the coming years.

The resting place identified was in use by a single individual. The loss of this roost is not expected to affect the conservation status of the species and compensation has been included in the design to retain roosting availability suitable to soprano pipistrelle bats within the site, as detailed in test 3.

Test 2 – There is no Satisfactory Alternative

The following alternative solutions are considered: ‘Do-Nothing’, or, ‘House retention’

Do-Nothing

If the development were to not go ahead, the dwelling would remain in place and likely continue to be used as a low suitability roost. This would result in the lack of provision of student housing as outlined in Test 1 and is therefore considered an unsatisfactory alternative under Test 2.

House retention

This option would encompass the retention of the existing one-off single house on site and the redevelopment of the remainder of the site. This option is not feasible for the following reasons:

- The subject site is zoned ‘Residential’ in the extant Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 and is factored into the core strategy housing yield numbers for the City’s development up to 2029.
- The Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities constitute Ministerial Guidelines under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). There is a renewed focus in the 2024 Guidelines on the renewal of existing settlements and on the interaction between residential density, housing standards and quality urban design and placemaking to support sustainable and compact growth. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that residential densities in the range 35 dph to 50 dph (net) shall generally be applied at suburban and urban extension locations in Galway, and that densities of up to 100 dph (net) shall be open for consideration at ‘accessible’ suburban / urban extension locations.
- The Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines published by the Minister under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), are intended to set out national planning policy guidelines on building heights in relation to urban areas. The Guidelines contain Specific Planning Policy Requirements (SPPR) that must be complied with by the relevant planning authority under Section 28 (1c) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The requirement to Page 11 comply with SPPRs has been established in recent case law following the judgement of *Conway v An Bord Pleanála & Ors* [2023] IEHC 178. It is a specific planning policy requirement that in planning the future development of greenfield or edge of city/town locations for housing purposes, planning authorities must secure: the minimum densities for such locations set out in the Guidelines issued by the Minister under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

Therefore, having regard to the above, the retention of the existing one-off single house on site and the redevelopment of the remainder of the site is not viable as the site would not be in compliance with the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities and the Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines. Therefore there is an absence of satisfactory alternative solutions under Test 2.

6.3 Test 3 – Favourable Conservation Status

6.3.1 Conservation Status Assessment

Annex IV species must be maintained at Favourable Conservation Status or restored to favourable status if this is not the case at present. The net result of granting a derogation licence must be neutral or positive for the species in question.

One soprano pipistrelle bat was recorded emerging from one building on the site. A small number of droppings were recorded within the roof of the structure. The bat was recorded exiting a gap in the fascia board positioned below the roof containing bat droppings. The structure does not contain a significant roost (i.e. maternity), it is suspected the roost is an opportunistic roost or satellite roost.

Soprano pipistrelle bats, associated with the roost identified, have a favourable conservation status. The population of this species has been increasing significantly and steadily. On this basis, and given the widespread distribution and very large population present in the country, no threats or pressures are considered to be significant at this point (NPWS 2025).

6.3.2 Mitigation Measures

A pre-commencement survey will be carried out, to identify any potential changes in the baseline since these surveys were undertaken in June 2024. This will include the inspection of all structures proposed for demolition. Demolition works will commence at an appropriate time of year, as agreed with a suitably licenced ecologist. Alternative roosting locations will be provided which gives roosting opportunity to other bats species also. Bat boxes will be erected within the Development site following best practice guidelines (Marnell et al., 2022; NRA 2006). A minimum of 4 no. woodcrete bat boxes are recommended for installation. Bat boxes should have a southerly orientation and be positioned at least 3m from the ground, away from artificial lighting from the operational phase of the development. They will be placed adjacent to vegetation features such as treelines and hedgerows to ensure they are close to existing flight paths and can avoid wide open spaces (Collins, 2023). Final bat box locations will be agreed in consultation with a licenced Ecologist. Integrated bat boxes can be considered in the construction of the residential development. At least one no. bat box will be placed onsite before works commence to allow for relocation of bats potentially found during the works. A Schwegler 2FN Woodcrete bat box, or similar, is recommended for this purpose.

The site does not provide high quality foraging/ commuting habitat as it is located within an urban location, however the landscape and lighting plan have both been designed in collaboration with project ecologists to avoid significant effects on wildlife by design and mitigate any unavoidable impacts. Treelines have been retained with the purpose of maintaining commuting corridors for birds and bats, the loss of the small roost will be mitigated with the provision of bat boxes, lighting has been limited and directed away from suitable bat features wherever possible and 35% of the site will be left as open habitat. The proposed landscaping scheme sensitively responds to the site's environmental and ecological constraints. Options to limit impacts on biodiversity beyond the do nothing scenario have been explored and applied where feasible, in line with safety standards, lighting standards and residential development requirements.

Implementation of the recommended mitigation will ensure that there will be no negative impacts to potential roosting bats when works will be undertaken. No significant impacts are anticipated on the local population of soprano pipistrelle bats.

7.

MONITORING THE IMPACTS OF THE DEROGATIONS

The location of the bat boxes will be checked post-installation by the designated Ecological Clerk of Works and will be monitored as part of routine maintenance to ensure no damage occurs. It is proposed for the boxes to be checked annually following installation. Monitoring of the alternative roosts will be undertaken to determine bat box use. This will include visual assessments (e.g. staining, wetness), endoscope surveys, thermal imaging, and/or DNA analysis of droppings found. Confirmation of occupancy will be provided to NPWS.

