

Updated EcIA and Bat Survey at
The Old Fire Station,
Colliery Road, Chirk,
Wrexham, Clwyd LL14 5PB
GR SJ 29381 38063
On 29th July 2023

Report completed 25th September 2023
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Summary

A protected species survey at The Old Fire Station, Chirk, was carried out on 29th July 2023 by Susan Worsfold and Craig Thomas.

Evidence of protected species was searched for at the request of Dave Bates of Forge Property Consultants, West Felton, in relation to proposed demolition of three buildings and the construction of new dwellings.

Birds

There is not considered to be any impact on birds as long as no nesting birds are disturbed during the process. Hedges should not be trimmed nor any trees felled between the beginning of March and the end of September to avoid the risk of harm to nesting birds.

Bats

There is not considered to be any impact on bats or their conservation status as a result of the development. However, if any bats are found during the development work in that area must stop and a licensed bat worker contacted for advice.

Great crested newts (GCN)

There is not considered to be any risk of harm to GCN or threat to their conservation status as long as reasonable avoidance measures are taken (page 8).

Other protected species

There was no evidence of any other protected species on the site or within 30 m of the site.

Susan Worsfold BSc (Hons) ACIEEM is an experienced wildlife surveyor, licensed bat worker and voluntary bat roost visitor. Registration number CLS 0895 2015-12555-CLS-CLS (CL15 Bat Roost Visitor Level 1) and registration number CLS 0895 2015-12556-CLS-CLS (CL18 Bat Survey Level 2) (Natural England) and S092944/1 (Natural Resources Wales);
Licensed great crested newt worker, registration number 2016-19947-CLS-CLS (NE) and S093012/1 (NRW)

Scope

A protected species survey at The Old Fire Station, Colliery Road, Chirk, Wrexham LL14 5PB were carried out on 29th July 2023 by Susan Worsfold and Craig Thomas at the request of Forge Property Consultants in relation to proposed demolition of the three buildings and the construction of new dwellings. Evidence of the presence of protected species was sought as defined in:

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and listed in:

Schedule 2. European protected species of animals

Schedule 5. European protected species of plants

The protection of Badgers Act 1992

Protected species which might be associated with such a site include bats, owls and other breeding birds. The area around the site might be used by badgers, dormice, amphibians and reptiles, and might contain protected plant species.

Background

A protected species survey and bat emergence survey were carried out in 2017 and again in 2021. No bats were found to be using any of the buildings. Buildings 1, 2 and 3 are currently not in use and their condition has deteriorated since the previous survey.

Procedures and equipment

The buildings were examined to establish the presence of or evidence of use by protected species of animals. A visual inspection was carried out to assess the potential or actual use by bats, of the interior and exterior of the buildings. They were searched systematically for any signs of bats, including droppings, rub marks and urine stains at entrances to roosts and insect remains, such as moth or butterfly wings. Crevices were checked where possible.

Powerful lamps (LED Lenser P14) were used for examination of interiors and under eaves. Binoculars were used to examine parts which were not otherwise accessible. Photographs were taken of all areas.

One dusk emergence survey was carried out in accordance with *Bat surveys for professional ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edn)* (Collins 2016) and the Interim Guidance Note: Use of night vision aids for bat emergence surveys and further comment on dawn surveys (*Bat Conservation Trust, May 2022*).

Frequency division detectors were used to record any bat sounds for later analysis on the computer. These were Peersonic RPA3.

The whole building was in view of the observers and infrared night vision aids (NVAs) were used alongside observers or to provide extra detail on areas of interest. These were Nightfox Red night vision goggles, mounted on tripods, with Nightfox XB5 IR torches.

Buildings 1 and 2

Building 3

Walls: wood, painted internally and externally.

Windows: glazed, intact.

Doors: wood, intact.

Roof and framework: pitched, tile, lined with wood planks. No loose or broken tiles. Some small gaps at the eaves so potential access for bats. Ridge tiles were intact with small gaps.

Ceiling: wood planks lining roof. There was no loft space.

Verge boards and soffits: wood soffit at one gable end. Wood verge boards at both gable ends.

There was a small wood porch at the north east gable end. This had a pitched corrugated steel roof lined with wood. There was some flashing at the gable ends with some gaps so potential access for bats.

No evidence of use by bats or birds was found internally or externally. There was considered to be low potential for use by bats.

The Land

The total area of the site is approximately 0.2 ha. There is a pond approximately 200 m from the site which was not accessible.

The garden associated with the buildings at the southern section was now mostly replaced by parking space. There still remained some dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), dock (*Rumex spp.*), rosebay willowherb (*Epilobium angustifolium*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*) and the plum tree. The hard standing between the buildings and along the perimeter is wider but still colonised by some willowherb, ragwort, nettle, bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), bindweed, ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and dandelion.

The west boundary hedge is composed entirely of privet (*Ligustrum sp.*). The east boundary hedge is more diverse, with hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and conifer in addition to the privet. The short section of hedge next to the road at the south is composed of rose (*Rosa sp.*), ash, holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and dogwood (*Cornus sp.*)

None of the hedges associated with the site fulfilled the criteria for an 'important' hedge, having no more than four species per 30 m length.

Other protected species

No badger setts were seen on the site or within 30 m of the site.

No evidence of use by dormice was found on or near the site.

No evidence of use of the site or nearby environment by any other protected species was found.

Date	Sunset/ Sunrise	Start	End	Temp Start °C	RH Start %	Temp End °C	RH End %	Cloud %	Wind 0-6
29/7/23	21.11	20.55	22:40	16	75	15	83	70	1

Observer 1: SW; equipment: Peersonic RPA3; Station: north corner of building 3

Observer 2: CT; equipment : Peersonic RPA3; Station: south corner of building 3

Bat species seen and/or recorded:

First bat:

Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)

Time: 21.35; *Location:* SW station (not seen)

Subsequently: Occasionally, both stations.

Other species:

Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)

Time: 21.47 *Location:* CT station

Subsequently: None.

The only bat to be seen was at 21.40 at SW station, a common pipistrelle arriving from the north and immediately flying south, over the roof of the building. No bats were seen to emerge from the building.

The view from the south was partially obscured by trees but no bats were seen to emerge from the area covered by them.

Conclusions and Impact Assessment

Birds

1. The impacts which the proposed development might have on birds should be small, providing that no nests are occupied or being built at the time the work is done.
2. In the interest of biodiversity enhancement it is recommended that one woodcrete nests suitable for small birds such as robin, blackbird, tit species and sparrow should be incorporated into each new building, and one woodcrete nests suitable for swallows. One swift brick is also recommended:
House Sparrow Terrace - Wooden (or woodcrete) nest box with 3 sub-divisions to support 3 nesting pairs. To be placed under the eaves of buildings or incorporated into walls. Entrance holes: 32mm diameter. Dimensions: H310 x W370 x D185mm. Also suitable for tits, redstarts and spotted flycatchers. Place at least 2 m from the ground.
Swallow nest - H110mm x W250mm x D140mm. The nest should be placed inside an enclosed outbuilding or shed, porch or garage leaving a distance of at least 6cm between the top of the nest and the ceiling. There must be access for the birds through an open window or sky-light. A car port or refuse bin shelter, or an outbuilding with a permanently open window or half door, or simply a space over the door, would suffice. Under the eaves of the buildings would be acceptable but less suitable.
Swift brick - an entrance hole of 55cm x 33cm. and external box/brick dimensions: Height 18cm x width 26.5 x depth 22cm.
Other designs of nest boxes may also be suitable.
3. If birds should gain access to the buildings and begin building nests before or during the work, then the work in that area will have to stop until the young have left the nests.
4. No owl pellets or droppings were found that would indicate that any of the buildings are being used by owls.

Bats

5. There is not considered to be any threat to the conservation status of bats or danger of harm to individuals by the proposed works as none were found to be roosting in the buildings and none of the trees on site were considered suitable for use by bats.
6. However, in the interests of biodiversity enhancement it is recommended that a bat box e.g. Schwegler 1FF is fitted externally to each new building. Further information is given in the bat box information pack available at <http://www.bats.org.uk/index.php>. Bat boxes should be placed in a south east to south west facing position where possible.
7. If bats are found at any stage of the development then work in that area must stop and a licensed bat worker contacted for advice.
8. A lighting plan should be designed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust guidelines: BCT and ILP Guidance Note 8 Bats and Artificial Lighting available at: <https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

Great Crested Newts (GCN)

9. Since there is a pond within 250 m of the site there is a potential of risk of harm to individual GCN due to the proposed development.
10. To prevent killing or injuring any foraging or commuting GCN reasonable avoidance measures should be taken as described on page 9.

Reasonable Avoidance Measures with Regard to Great Crested Newts (GCN)

It is a criminal offence to harm a great crested newt.

Great crested newts spend most of their time on land, returning to still water only to breed once they are mature at about 3-4 years of age.

They may travel more than kilometre from their breeding pond.

They move about mostly at night, and by day creep underground or beneath shelter such as stones or logs. They hibernate during the winter, which is generally from the beginning of November until late March, depending on the weather. Hibernation is underground in burrows made by other small animals or beneath substantial cover such as large stones or piles of logs.

1. The vegetation in all areas should be kept as short as possible.
2. If any trenches cannot be filled the same day they will need a ramp of earth made at the ends of the trenches, to the full depth of each trench, so that newts can climb out. It is not sufficient to leave a piece of wood against the sides, which would allow small mammals to escape, but not newts, which are not good climbers. The trenches must be inspected carefully before infilling, and any animals carefully removed and released into the surrounding hedgerows (but see para 7 below).
3. Building materials should be stored clear of the ground (say, on pallets) so as to avoid crushing any animals which might seek refuge under them, when the materials are lifted. Any such storage must be on a gravel drive or other hard surface, and not on a lawn or other soft surface.
4. If any potential refuges such as piles of rubble or logs need to be moved before work starts, care must be taken when moving them. This should be done by hand.
5. Any open pipework should be capped overnight. All open trenches and pipework should be inspected at the start of each working day to ensure no animal is trapped.
6. Any excavated material which is not replaced on the same day must either be removed from the site or stored on a hard surface and covered with an impermeable membrane, such as a plastic sheet or tarpaulin, and the edges of the sheet secured so that no amphibians can gain access.
7. If any great crested newt is discovered in the area of the work, then work in that area must stop and a licensed great crested newt worker contacted immediately for advice.

Bibliography

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Aerial Photograph



★ Position of observer, bat detector and NVA



Photographs





Survey Diagram

