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Author	Mick Smith
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marches ecology

**Unit 23, The Malthouse Business Centre,
Regent Street, Llangollen, Denbighshire, LL20 8HS
01978 860889**



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Marches Ecology was commissioned by Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) and nesting bird assessment of The Bungalow, Henblas Street, Rhostyllen, Wrexham (Approximate OS Grid Ref. SJ 3134 4875). This assessment included all the built structures within the survey site.
- 1.1.2 This report is provided as supporting information to the submission of a '*Notice of Intended Demolition*' (*Building Act 1984, Sections 80-83*).
- 1.1.3 The PRA was required to determine whether the proposed works would affect bats and nesting birds. The survey work to inform this report was carried out on the 28th July 2022 by Mick Smith (Wildbanks Conservation); Natural Resources Wales (NRW) bat licence no. S089440/2.
- 1.1.4 This report is valid for a period of two years from the survey date in accordance with best practice.
- 1.1.5 All British bats (and roost sites) are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981* (as amended). In addition, all bats are classified as European Protected Species by *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017* (as amended). Under this legislation, it is an offence to kill, injure or disturb a bat, or to destroy any place used as a shelter by bats. Further information on relevant legislation is provided in *Section 8*.
- 1.1.6 Should evidence of bats be found and it is deemed likely that the proposed works will disturb them a licence from NRW must be obtained before any work may proceed.

1.2 The Proposal

- 1.2.1 It is proposed to demolish The Bungalow along with a detached garage and all other built structures on the site. Further information is provided in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) (Marches Ecology 2022).

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Survey Area

- 2.1.1 The survey site is located approximately 2.6 km south-west of Wrexham city centre, within the centre of Rhostyllen village (*Figure 1* below). Rhostyllen Primary School is located to the south-west and the school field immediately adjoins the survey site. The surrounding landscape is dominated by residential properties and beyond that agricultural fields and Wrexham city. The A483 road is aligned north to south approximately 488 m to the west of the survey site. The National Trust Erddig Estate is some 900 m to the east.
- 2.1.2 The main property within the survey site is a detached bungalow that has been empty for a number of months. A block-built and rendered single-storey garage is also present within the site as well as three garden sheds. For the purpose of this report the bungalow is identified as building B1, the garage as building B2 and the sheds as B3-B5 (*Figure 2* below).
- 2.1.3 The wider survey site consists of overgrown gardens with mature shrubs and hard-standing including large areas of paving, drive-way and gravel. A single Weeping Willow tree is present within the front garden.



**Figure 1: The survey site is shown by the red line. Approximate only.
Base Image © Google 2022.**



Figure 2: The surveyed buildings, shown by the red lines.

Base Image © Google 2022

2.2 Statutory and Non-Statutory Designated Sites

- 2.2.1 There are no statutory designated sites within 1 km of the survey site.
- 2.2.2 There are is one non-statutory designated site within 1 km of the survey site: Big Wood Wildlife Site (WS). Big Wood WS is located approximately 964 m to the northwest of the survey site at its closest point. Further information is provided in Marches Ecology (2022).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Preliminary Roost Assessment

- 3.1.1 The building inspections were carried out on the 28th July 2022 by Mick Smith, NRW bat licence no. S08944/2. Where deemed necessary Potential Roost Feature (PRF) assessments were carried out following best practice guidelines (Collins, 2016). Photographic evidence was taken where necessary.
- 3.1.2 The buildings were assessed for any signs of bats. With the aid of binoculars and a borescope, features such as small gaps under barge/ soffit/ fascia boards, raised or missing roof/ ridge tiles or gaps at gable ends, which have the potential for use as access points, were sought. Evidence that bats actively used these potential access points would include staining within the gaps, or bat droppings or urine staining under gaps; a note being made wherever these were present. The presence of cobwebs and/ or general detritus within and around potential access points was used as an indicator that bats had not recently used the feature to access the building. Following the external assessment, an internal assessment of the buildings was undertaken, searching for the same evidence.
- 3.1.3 The buildings were also assessed for their potential value to nesting birds.

3.2 Limitations

- 3.2.1 There were no limitations to the survey, all parts of the buildings could be accessed. The buildings are empty and the floors were bare and window sills clear. Any bat droppings that may be present would have been seen.
- 3.2.2 The survey was carried out in July; this is within the main activity season for bats (May to August) and as such the optimum period for finding signs of bats.
- 3.2.3 No heavy rain had fallen within the last two days and as such any droppings that may be present on the outside of the building would likely still be present.

4 SURVEY RESULTS

4.1 Building Descriptions

- 4.1.1 The survey site includes a detached bungalow and large garage/ snooker room with toilet and small kitchen. Also present within the garden are two wooden and corrugated tin sheet sheds (B3 and B5) and a small wooden shed (B4).
- 4.1.2 The external and internal descriptions of the buildings B1 and B2 are detailed in *Table 1* below.
- 4.1.3 Buildings B3, B4 and B5 are small single-storey sheds constructed of timber with corrugated steel mono-pitch roofs and timber or steel sheet walls. All buildings are largely obscured by vegetation and an apple tree overhanging from the adjacent plot to the south. Building B3 is open on the western end allowing light and weather ingress.



Plate 1. Building B3



Plate 2. Building B3 internal



Plate 3. Building B5

Table 1 – Building Descriptions

Building 1 (B1) - Bungalow			
External Description	External Photo	Internal Description	Internal Photo
Building 1 is a brick-built and rendered bungalow. The walls are very well sealed. The roof is slate with clay ridge tiles and a brick chimney protruding with lead flashing. A concrete verge is present on each gable. Barge-boards or soffit boxes are also present. Timber doors and windows are present on the southern, western and northern aspects only. These are in good condition. A small porch is present on the northern aspect and flat roofed lean-to extensions on the southern and western aspects.	 Northern elevation.  Southern elevation.	The bungalow has only recently become empty having previously been occupied. It has been emptied of furniture. In the western half of the roof no loft void exists, an 'office' room has been built in the pitched roof. Cupboards have been built at floor height that are under the roof slope.	 Office within western roof space.  Internal photo of cupboard within office, showing insulation.

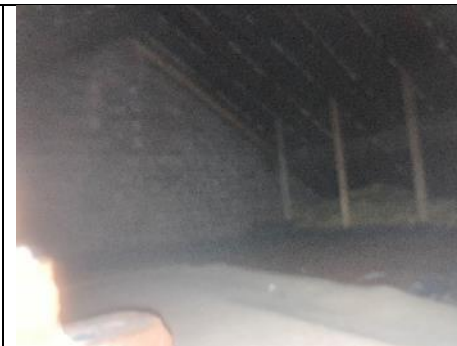


Eastern elevation.



Western and northern elevation.

The eastern end of the loft is a more traditional loft construction. It has timber rafters, purlins and bitumen F1 membrane. The ridge height is 2.2 m.



Loft space in eastern half of building.

Building 2 (B2) – Garage/ Snooker Room			
External Description	External Photo	Internal Description	Internal Photo
Building 2 is a block-built garage/ snooker-room measuring approximately 15 m x 6 m. It has a flat roof and windows and door on the eastern aspect. A large roller shutter garage door is on the northern aspect. Barge boards are present on all sides with a narrow ventilation strip incorporated at its base.	 Northern elevation.  Eastern elevation.	Internally the building is split into a garage and a snooker-room with toilet and small kitchen also present. It has only recently been emptied.	No internal photos.

4.2 PRA Results

- 4.2.1 Five buildings are present on the survey site. No evidence of bat use was found within any of the five buildings during the assessment. Evidence would have included, live bats, droppings, staining or feeding remains.
- 4.2.2 Building B1, the Bungalow, is very well maintained and sealed to bats and birds. The walls are rendered and provide no roosting opportunities. The windows and doors also provide no cracks or gaps around them potentially useable by bats. The roof is in very good condition; no raised, broken or slipped slates were seen and the ridge tiles were all well sealed with no gaps beneath them. The verges are well sealed with no potential features seen. No gaps were present within the lead flashing around the chimney. No gaps were present under barge boards or into soffit boxes.
- 4.2.3 Potential access points and roosting features in Building B1 are described in *Table 2* below.

Table 2 – Potential features and access points for bats and birds in Building B1

Building B1		
Location	Feature Description	Example Photos
Bungalow northern elevation	One PRF present. Verge sealed apart from one gap. Close inspection identified as cobwebbed over with two large spiders 'guarding' the feature. No bat droppings were seen associated with this feature. <i>Ruled out due to presence of spiders.</i>	
Bungalow western elevation	A small gap in the mortar at the apex of the verge on the western aspect was also identified, this was not accessible to check. It is approximately 20 mm x 15 mm, which is considered a sub-optimal access point for bats.	

- 4.2.4 The loft of Building B1 was thoroughly checked and no droppings or evidence of bat use was found. No direct flight access points were present and no light ingress through cracks or similar was seen within the loft. The membrane was in excellent condition with no rips or damage.
- 4.2.5 Building B2, the garage/ snooker room provides no features suitable for roosting bats. The barge boards are all well sealed with only minimal gaps present (0 mm to 10 mm) and cobwebbed. The garage/ snooker room has a flat roof and provides no roosting features within it. There is no access onto the wall plate due to the barge boards. The building is

rendered and the walls, windows and doors provide no potential features, all being completely sealed with no cracks or gaps.

4.2.6 Potential access points and roosting features in Building B2 are described in *Table 3* below.

Table 3 – Potential features and access points for bats and birds in Building B2

Building B2		
Location	Feature Description	Example Photos
Garage/ snooker room	No PRF's present within garage/ snooker room. Barge boards very well sealed.	

4.2.7 Buildings B3-B5, the garden sheds, do not provide features suitable for use by bats. No cavities are present within the walls or roof. They are 'single skin' of corrugated steel sheets or timber walls fixed on to a timber framework. The sheds are also largely smothered by vegetation.

4.3 Bird Assessment Results

4.3.1 No evidence of nesting birds, present or historic was seen within Buildings B1 and B2. A dead Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) was recorded inside Building B2 and may have entered via a vent in one of the windows. These two buildings have minor features at most that might be exploited by nesting birds.

4.3.2 The vegetation growing over and around Buildings B3-B5 could be used by a number of nesting birds. Buildings B3-B5 have minor features at most that might be exploited by nesting birds.

4.3.3 The overgrown gardens around these buildings could be used by several nesting birds. Further information is provided in Marches Ecology (2022).

5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Discussion; bats

- 5.1.1 The survey site has been subject to a bat Preliminary Roost Assessment survey on the 28th July 2022. No evidence of bats using any of the buildings was identified during the survey.
- 5.1.2 The habitat surrounding the survey site is predominantly residential gardens as it is within the village of Rhosyllen. Immediately adjacent to the survey site is Rhosyllen Primary School playing field which would provide some foraging opportunities for bats. Beyond the village of Rhosyllen there are agricultural fields, the National Trust Estate of Erddig Hall to the southeast and Wrexham city to the north-east.
- 5.1.3 The bungalow is very well sealed and maintained, the roof was in excellent condition and all windows, doors, barge boards and soffit boxes present did not have any suitable bat access points. Two sub-optimal potential roost features for bats were identified within Building B1 only. The garage/ snooker room was also very well sealed and had a flat roof providing no potential features suitable for bats.
- 5.1.4 The garden sheds were of a construction type and constructed with materials that would not provide the conditions suitable for bats. Furthermore, their location within dense vegetation limits the flight access routes into the sheds for bats.
- 5.1.5 The buildings within the survey site are categorised in *Table 4* below in accordance with Collins (2016).

Table 4 – Assessment of Roosting Potential

Building	Building Description	Potential Roost Feature	Bat Potential Assessment
B1	Bungalow	Two sub-optimal features	Negligible
B2	Garage/ Snooker room	No PRF's	Negligible
B3	Garden shed	No PRF's	Negligible
B4	Garden shed	No PRF's	Negligible
B5	Garden shed	No PRF's	Negligible

- 5.1.6 Based on the findings of the PRA no nocturnal (emergence) survey work in relation to bats is required and the proposed demolition work can proceed. However, as two sub-optimal features have been identified within Building B1, and those features are of a type that are suitable for species that are more likely to be present in an urban environment, proportionate Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) are recommended.

5.2 Discussion; birds

- 5.2.1 The survey site including the various buildings could be used by a number of nesting birds. Further information is provided in Marches Ecology (2022).

5.3 Recommendations; bats

- 5.3.1 All of the buildings inspected have been categorised as having negligible bat roosting potential. As such no further survey work is recommended for bats.
- 5.3.2 As bats were not found to be using the buildings **a licence will not be required** for the works. The demolition and clearance of the site can be carried out at any time of year (subject to nesting bird restrictions – *Section 5.4*). As two sub-optimal features have been identified in Building B1 and the potential for bats to use this building as an occasional roost in small numbers cannot be entirely discounted, a precautionary approach is recommended. A RAMs approach is briefly detailed in *Section 6*.

5.4 Recommendations; birds

- 5.4.1 The disturbance and/ or destruction of bird nests is prohibited under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended). If demolition works commence during the nesting bird season (March-August inclusive), there is potential for nesting birds to be disturbed and nests to be destroyed during the process. To avoid impacts on nesting birds, a pre-works nesting bird check of the survey site should be undertaken by a qualified ecologist prior to any works taking place. If nests are identified, the nests must remain intact and undisturbed until the young have fledged.
- 5.4.2 If possible, the demolition works should be undertaken outside the bird nesting season.

6 REASONABLE AVOIDANCE MEASURES

6.1 Bats

- 6.1.1 The demolition and clearance of the site can be carried out at any time of year (subject to nesting bird restrictions – *Section 5.4*).
- 6.1.2 In order to protect bats in the unlikely event that any are present, RAMs should be followed at all times during all works.
- 6.1.3 A Toolbox Talk should be produced and delivered by a suitably qualified ecologist to all contractors working on the site prior to the commencement of works. Subsequent to delivery of the Toolbox Talk it should be incorporated into all site inductions.
- 6.1.4 A licensed bat-worker or accredited agent should be present to oversee removal of the two sub-optimal potential bat features prior to any other demolition-related works on Building B1. The removal of any feature with bat roost potential, will be undertaken by hand in suitable weather conditions and under direct ecological supervision. Where applicable, materials will be removed carefully away and not rolled or sprung to avoid potential harm to bats. The undersides of these materials will be checked by the licensed ecologist or accredited agent for bats that may be clung to them before removal.
- 6.1.5 If bats are encountered at any time during any works, all works must immediately stop and a licenced ecologist must be called. A licence will then be required from Natural Resources Wales before works can continue.

7 ENHANCEMENT MEASURES

7.1 Bats

- 7.1.1 The demolition of the buildings and re-development of the survey site provides an opportunity for ecological enhancement measures as part of any proposed scheme.
- 7.1.2 No details for the proposed re-development of the survey site are currently available. In order to enhance the wider area for bats, it is recommended that at least four bat-boxes (*i.e.*, Vincent Pro Bat Box¹, 1FF Schwegler Bat Box² and 2F Schwegler Bat Box³) suitable for crevice dwelling bats are erected onto trees within the grounds of Rhostyllen Primary School or onto the building itself. These bat-boxes should be installed in accordance with Collins (2016); at between 3-4 m in height and positioned two per tree with a clear flight-path and orientated between east and west.
- 7.1.3 It is recommended that opportunities for roosting bats are also incorporated in any proposed new building on the site. These features could include the Ibstock Enclosed Bat Box C⁴, Habibat 001 Bat-box⁵ and/ or Habibat Bat Access Slate⁶.

7.2 Birds

- 7.2.1 To compensate for the loss of bird nesting habitat due to the demolition and clearance works new bird nesting opportunities should be provided in the grounds of Rhostyllen Primary School and within the new development. A minimum of six nest-boxes suitable for small birds could be erected (*i.e.*, 2H Schwegler Robin box⁷, 1B Schwegler nest-box⁸ with 26mm and 32 mm diameter entrance holes).

¹ <https://www.nhbs.com/vincent-pro-bat-box>

² <https://www.nhbs.com/1ff-schwegler-bat-box-with-built-in-wooden-rear-panel>

³ <https://www.nhbs.com/2f-schwegler-bat-box-general-purpose>

⁴ <https://www.nhbs.com/ibstock-enclosed-bat-box-c>

⁵ <http://www.habibat.co.uk/category/bat-boxes/habibat-001-bat-box-bespoke-facing>

⁶ <https://www.nhbs.com/habibat-bat-access-slate>

⁷ <https://www.nhbs.com/2h-schwegler-robin-box>

⁸ <https://www.nhbs.com/1b-schwegler-nest-box>

8 LEGISLATION

8.1 Bats

All species of British bat are listed on *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended)⁹, and receive full protection under *Section 9*. They are also listed as European Protected Species on *Schedule 2* of *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017*^{10,11} which gives them full protection under *Regulation 42(1)*. Protection was extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000* (the CROW Act 2000).

Under the above legislation it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- kill, injure or take an individual of such a species;
- possess any part of such species either alive or dead;
- damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place or structure used by such species for shelter, rest, protection or breeding;
- disturb such a species whilst using any place of shelter or protection; or
- sell or attempt to sell any such species.

Several species of bat are included on *Section 7* of the *Environment Act 2016*.

All species of British bat are also protected under *Schedule 6* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended). This protection relates specifically to trapping and direct pursuit of the species.

8.2 Birds

All species of bird are protected under *Section 1* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended). The protection was extended by the *CROW Act 2000*.

The legislation makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
- take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

Certain species of bird are listed on *Schedule 1* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) and receive protection under *Sections 1(4)* and *1(5)* of the Act. The legislation confers special penalties where the above mentioned offences are committed for any such bird and also make it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- disturb any such bird, whilst building its nest or it is in or near a nest containing dependant young; or
- disturb the dependant young of such a bird.

Section 7 of the *Environment Act 2016* includes several birds.

⁹ HMSO (1981). *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*. HMSO, London.

¹⁰ HMSO (2017). *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017*. HMSO, London.

¹¹ Updated by HMSO (2021). *The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019*. HMSO, London.

9 REFERENCES

Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, (3rd Edition)*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

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