



Leigh Ecology Ltd

Protected Species and Habitat Surveys

**The Long Croft,
Green Street,
Holt,
Wrexham,
LL13 9JF.**

Bat Scoping Survey Report and Ecological Assessment

Report number:R-C 22/001

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Date: 19/09/22

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1 SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 The subject site comprises a large detached residential building and adjacent outbuildings, located at The Long Croft, Green Street, Holt, Wrexham LL13 9JF.
- 1.1.2 The works will entail a complete renovation to the existing building for residential purposes with an additional dwelling being added at the rear of the property. The original structure will be maintained. Vegetation removal will not be required (minimal) for the purpose of this development.
- 1.1.3 Therefore, to facilitate the works on the building and to inform the planning application, a survey for bat species (*Chiroptera*) and an ecological assessment was undertaken on the 1st September 2022.
 - 1.1.1 No active signs of bats were located during the survey, tracks of badger were noted in the meadow at the rear of the property.
 - 1.1.2 Given the un-sealed nature of the building and the very old nature of the roof and supports, it can be categorised as having **low bat potential**.
 - 1.1.3 A dusk emergence survey was conducted as a response to this potential. The bat population in the wider area is very healthy with 3 species being recorded.
 - 1.1.4 Pipistrelle bats were observed commuting from the park at the front of the property to the meadow and mature hedgerows at the rear. No bats were seen leaving the house or the outbuildings **and it is considered that no bats are roosting in any of the target buildings on site**.
 - 1.1.5 The outbuildings offer ideal bird nesting habitat, **a thorough check by an ecologist for nests is recommended if any associated works take place within the bird breeding season**.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1.1 An unoccupied detached brick dwelling has been identified for development for residential purposes, including plans for a second dwelling at the rear of the existing property, which will be renovated. A number of existing outbuildings will also be impacted by the proposal. A protected species survey was required, namely bat species (*Chiroptera*), in order to inform the planning application.
- 2.1.2 For development proposals requiring planning permission, the presence of protected species, and therefore the need for a survey is a material planning consideration under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Adequate surveys are therefore required to establish the presence or absence of protected species, to enable a prediction of the likely impact of the proposed development on them and their breeding site or resting places and, if necessary, to design mitigation and compensation methods.
- 2.1.3 For any development to proceed lawfully at a site where protected species are present, a licence issued by Natural England, under the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c.) Regulations 2010 (as amended) may be required. Information gathered during the surveys is used to inform such a licence application.
- 2.1.4 The objective of the study was to identify the presence or potential presence of bat species within the buildings identified on-site.
- 2.1.5 A preliminary roost survey, consisting of an external survey of the target building, was conducted on the 23rd August 2021. A subsequent emergence survey was also deemed necessary and was conducted on the 13/09/2022.
- 2.1.6 This report provides the output from the bat scoping and ecological assessment survey.

2.2 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Bats

2.2.1 There are 17 species of bats in the UK, all of which suffered a decline in population size and distribution during the 20th century; even those species regarded to be the most common suffered a 70% decline between 1978 and 1993 (Mitchel-Jones and McLeish, 2004).

2.2.2 All species of bats are listed under Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and Regulation 41 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and are therefore afforded special protection. It is an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bat;
 - Intentionally damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a wild bat uses for shelter or protection; and
 - Intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.

2.2.3 Bats are further protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 which make it an offence to:

- Capture or kill a bat;
- Significantly disturb a bat (in any location); and
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any bat.

2.2.4 If bats are present on a development site and, as a result of the development there is a likelihood that a roost may be damaged or destroyed, or where there is considered to be a reasonable possibility that bats occupying a roost may be significantly disturbed, or where there would be a requirement to significantly disturb a bat irrespective of its location, the development can only proceed if a European Protected Species (EPS) license is issued by Natural England.

2.2.5 In England and Wales, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 imposes a duty on all public bodies, including local authorities to make material considerations to biodiversity conservation in the determination of all types of planning applications. The UK Biodiversity Strategy was produced in response to the convention.

The strategy contains action plans for species considered to be of conservation priority at a national (under Species Action Plans (SAP) and local scale (under Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs).

- 2.2.6 The UKBAP lists seven bat species considered as priorities, the relevant SBAP (Cheshire) lists several bat species, Noctule bat (*Nyctalus noctule*) and Pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus Pipistrellus* and *P. pygmaeus*).

Survey Limitations

- 2.2.7 The survey was unhindered by any limitation and was carried out without interruption.

Landscape Assessment

- 2.2.8 Bats use regular commuting and foraging routes; these are usually linear features such as hedgerows and watercourse corridors. The loss and severance of such a feature may have an indirect impact on the bats. Therefore, it is important that if the development impacts on these features, they are assessed.

Nesting Birds

- 2.2.9 An assessment of potential suitability for breeding birds was undertaken.

2.3 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.3.1 The proposal site accommodates a large, detached brick residential property and adjacent outbuildings. A meadow is at the rear of the property with typically associated hedgerows; the development is limited to this extent.
- 2.3.2 The building is located on a hard-standing parcel yard within a semi-rural environment, directly adjacent to the large but narrow meadow. The wider surrounding area comprises a typical rural environment consisting of large open fields with surrounding hedgerows.
- 2.3.3 The site grid reference SJ 410542.
- 2.3.4 The proposed development will see a renovation of the existing residential property with an additional dwelling being added to the footprint at the rear.
- 2.3.5 The site map below shows the scope of the survey and maps the position of the target building, identified by the red arrow.

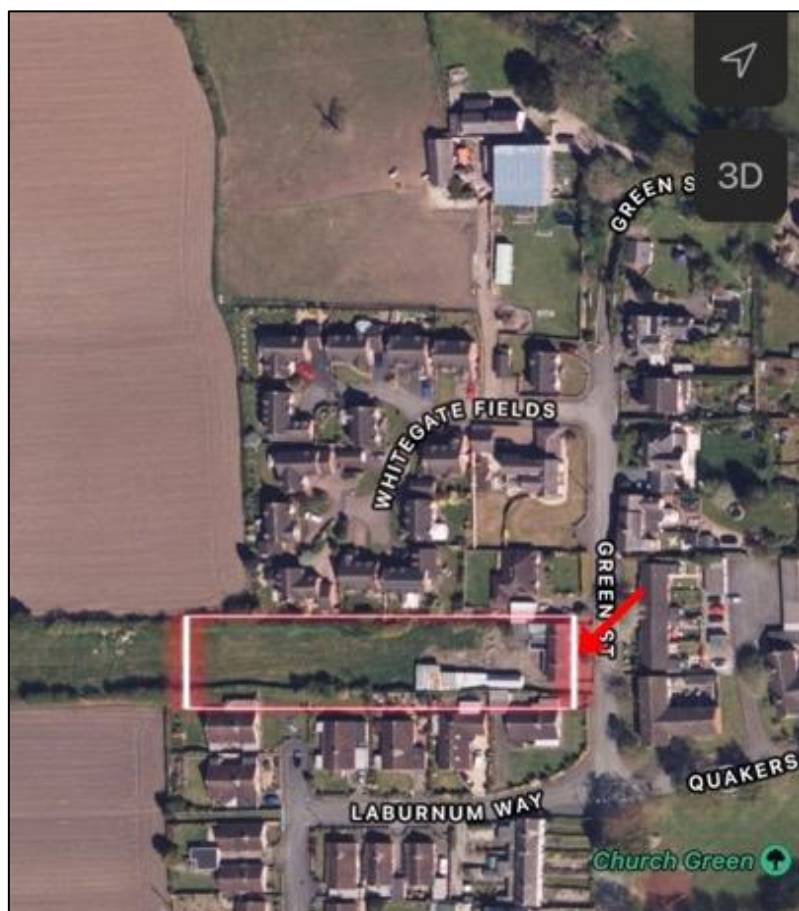


Fig 1: Map of the site, named The Long Croft, Green Street, Holt, Wrexham, LL13 9JF.

(Google Earth – 2019)



Fig 2: Showing the position of surveyors during the emergence survey and the direction of focus.



Fig 3: Showing the rear elevation of the main target building and outbuildings, taken from the meadow.



Fig 4: Showing the front elevation of the main target building.



Fig 5: Showing the extent of Ivy encroachment into the front porch of the property leading directly inside.



Fig 6: Showing roof damage and more potential entry points for bats into the main target building.



Fig 7: Showing the largest of the outbuildings.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 The internal and external roost survey and assessment and subsequent emergence survey was undertaken by Ashley Powell MSc working as an accredited agent for a Natural England licensed surveyor: Roy Leigh NE licence 2015/15883-CLS. A second survey provided observational assistance during the emergence survey – Mark Powell.
- 3.1.2 Survey methods were based-upon the standard and specification detailed in the BCTs Bat Surveys- Good Practise Guidelines (BCT, 2016). The building was inspected internally and externally on 1st September 2022. The emergence survey took place on the evening of the 13th September 2022.

External Inspection

- 3.1.3 The objective of the survey was to locate any signs of bat activity, for example:
- Bat droppings;
 - Feeding remains;
 - Grease staining/ urine marks;
 - Corpses or skeletons;
 - Potential access points to internal roosts.
- 3.1.4 The bat signs listed above are visible from the outside of the building. The following areas were searched using binoculars:
- Ground floor casing;
 - Any cracks/ holes in steel sheet walls;
 - At door opening points;
 - Joint between walls and roof.

Internal Inspection

3.1.5 Bats regularly utilise specific areas within roof spaces/open roof configurations (see below), which were searched as a priority for any bat field signs:

- Beneath hip joints and junctions;
- Staining above/ around gaps;
- Within cobwebs;
- In cavities of walls within the roof wall joints;

3.1.6 The internal building survey covered the whole of the area.

3.1.7 The surveys were undertaken using a 168-lumen flashlight and 10x42 Swarovski binoculars.

3.1.8 Ladders were used to access elevated areas with potential for bat signs.

Emergence survey

3.1.9 The emergence survey took place in suitable weather conditions and lasted for 2 hours beginning 15 minutes prior to sunset. The temperature remained consistent at 14 degrees for the duration of the survey. See **Appendix 1** for full weather data.

Survey limitations

3.1.10 All areas of the building were fully accessible, and care was taken, therefore the survey was considered comprehensive.

4 RESULTS

Internal and external inspection

- 4.1 The building is considered to be of **low bat roost potential**; the structure offers some features typically associated with bat roosts and is unsealed to the external elements in numerous areas, see **Figure 4,5 & 6**.
- 4.2 The site is located in a semi-rural area and features a large narrow un-maintained meadow with mature hedgerows. These features offer ideal foraging habitat for local bat populations. Whilst Badger *Meles meles* tracks were located within the meadow, it is considered that these are from commuting individuals and no evidence of a Sett was located within the meadow or hedgerows.
- 4.3 **No active signs of bats were found on site.**
- 4.4 An old nest was located in the end outbuilding which is an exposed hey/wood store. It is also noted that the other outbuildings would be suitable for other nesting birds such as Swallows if located, due to their exposed nature. Therefore, **the clearance and removal of these buildings should be done outside the bird breeding season or following a detailed hand search conducted by a suitably experienced and qualified ecologist.**
- 4.5 A comprehensive evening emergence survey, covering all aspects of the property, resulted in no bats leaving the building. Only minimal passes were recorded by Pipistrelle bats which were observed entering the site boundary from the North West where there is a park with a number of mature deciduous trees, these individuals proceeded into the meadow using the hedgerows as commuting/foraging routes. A Noctule bat was recorded and observed passing over high at dusk.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The results of the bat scoping survey indicate that the target building offers **low bat roost potential**.
- 5.2 The emergence survey revealed very little other than low numbers of bat feeding activity around the site boundary. **It is not considered that bats are roosting in the main target building or the outbuildings on site**
- 5.3 The meadow at the rear of the property provides suitable habitat for other protected species and Badger tracks were located. However, the proposed development would not alter these commuting routes and it is considered that no impact to the local population would be present given the current scope of the scheme. A number of features of interest occur within the meadow but beyond the scope of the current proposal, **should the boundary of the scheme change this would need revisiting. The predominant feature of interest is the broken Ash Tree within the northern hedgerow which would require a bat survey should plans change.**

6 REFERENCES

Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). Bat surveys for professional ecologists: Good practice guidelines. 3rd edition. Bat Conservation Trust. London.

Bat Conservation Trust (2016). Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. and McLiesh, A.P. (2004) Bat Workers Manual. 3rd ed. JNCC, Peterborough.

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. (2004) Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough.

Appendix 1

Emergence Survey Data

Sunset: 19.33

Start Time: 19:15

Finish Time: 21.18

Vantage Point 1 Location - +53,082 -2.882

Vantage Point 2 Location - +53,081 -2.882

	Start	Finish
Temperature	14	14
Rain	0	0
Wind	1 SE	Still
Cloud Cover	4/8	5/8
Visibility	Good	Low