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Althrey Woodhouse
Overton Road
Bangor-on-Dee
LL13 0DA

Interim Bat Survey Report

Moss Company

VERSION 2

Final

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1. Introduction

BiOME Consulting Ltd was commissioned by Moss Company LLP (on behalf of the site owner) in March 2022 to undertake a update Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) in relation to the proposed demolition of a dwelling located at Althrey Woodhouse, Overton Road, Bangor-on-Dee, LL13 0DA ('the site').

This survey was completed to update the findings of a survey undertaken in 2019¹.

Due to the nature of the redevelopment project, this appraisal focused on assessing the potential presence/likely absence of roosting bats and/or nesting birds.

Figure 1. Site Location¹



¹ Arbor Vitae (2019). *Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Addendum. Althrey Woodhouse*

1.1. Site Description

Althrey Woodhouse is a detached dwelling (**Photograph 1**) with lawns and shrub beds to the west and south and an area of tarmac forming a parking area to the east of the house.

The existing house was brick built with all external walls rendered and painted. Each corner of the house features stone quoins. The house is rectangular in outline with two pavilions extending from the eastern elevation (**Photograph 1**).

Photograph 1. Althrey Woodhouse



1.2. Development Proposal

It is proposed to demolish and replace the dwelling.

2. Legislative Context

All native bat species and the sites that they use for breeding or resting are afforded protection through the provisions within Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Species and Habitat Regulations 2018. It is therefore an offence, without a licence from the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (SNCO), to intentionally or recklessly kill or injure bats; to disturb, obstruct, damage or destroy their active roosts (including when those roosts are unoccupied) or to take, possess or trade in bats and their parts (alive or dead).

Disturbance in the context of the offences above is disturbance which is likely to impair the ability of animals to survive, to breed or reproduce, to nurture their young, to hibernate, to migrate; or to affect significantly the local distribution of the species.

Four species of bat, Greater Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, Lesser Horseshoe Bat *R. hipposideros*, Bechstein's Bat *Myotis bechsteinii* and Western Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*, are included on Annex II of the Habitats Directive, which requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation to ensure the maintenance of favourable conservation status (and these are therefore generally considered as perhaps the most important UK species).

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 places the duties on public bodies in Wales to conserve and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. This duty includes consideration of the resilience of ecosystems in terms of their diversity, connectivity, adaptability, scale and condition. The Act also reinforces the duties in relation to the lists of species and habitats of importance and duties to conserve and enhance those species and habitats. These are referred to as Section 7 (S7) Habitats and Species. Eight species of bat are included on S7; Barbastelle, Bechstein's Bat, Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, Brown Long-eared Bat *Plecotus auritus*, Greater Horseshoe Bat and Lesser Horseshoe Bat.

A licence can be granted by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for developments (sometimes referred to as European Protected Species (EPS) Licences or

Derogation Licences) providing the purposes of the licence is for “*preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment*”.

3. Methodologies

Due to the limited extent of the re-development proposal, the surveys focussed on determining the potential presence/likely absence of roosting bats and nesting birds.

3.1. Field Survey

3.1.1. Suitably Qualified Ecologist

Martyn holds survey licenses in relation to Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*, bats (NRW bat licence number: SO89604-1) and a variety of Schedule 1 birds (including Barn Owl *Tyto alba*).

3.1.2. Preliminary Roost Assessment

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) survey was completed on 25 March 2022, in line with appropriate survey guidance².

The survey involved a systematic search of the exterior of the building to identify potential or actual bat access points and roosting sites, and to locate any evidence of bats such as live or dead specimens, bat droppings, urine splashes, fur-oil staining and/or squeaking noises. It should be noted that sometimes bats leave no visible sign of their presence on the outside of a building (and even when they do wet weather can wash away evidence).

The external inspection also included the examination of the ground, particularly beneath any potential bat access points, for example any windowsills, window panes, walls, hanging tiles, weatherboarding, eaves, soffit boxes, fascias, lead flashing, gaps under felt, and under tiles/slates.

A systematic search of the interior of the building was completed, searching for actual/potential bat access points, roosting sites and to locate any evidence of bats (e.g. live/dead specimens, droppings, urine splashes, fur-oil staining, feeding remains (such as moth wings), squeaking noises, bat-fly *Nycteribiidae* or odour).

² Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (3rd edn.). The Bat Conservation Trust, London

Again, it should be noted that occasionally bats leave no visible sign of their presence in a building's interior, particularly when there are hidden cracks, crevices and/or voids.

The inspection of buildings and built structures for evidence of bats², which can be conducted at all times of year, was facilitated by the use of ladders, a high-powered torch, endoscope and small dental mirrors to inspect accessible crevices considered likely to support bats. Weather conditions on the day of the survey were appropriate for undertaking ecological fieldwork (sunny and dry).

The potential suitability of the barn for roosting bats was assessed in line with relevant guidelines² and allocated to one of the categories detailed within **Table 1**.

Table 1. Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats

Suitability	Description of Roosting Habitats
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.
Low	A structure/tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation).
Moderate	A structure/tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
High	A structure/tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.
Confirmed Roost	Definitive evidence of roosting bats, i.e. live animals or accumulation of droppings associated with Potential Roost Features (PRF).

3.2. Limitations

The findings presented in this study represent those at the time of survey and reporting, and data collected from available sources. Ecological surveys are limited by factors which affect the presence of plants and animals, such as the time of year, migration patterns and behaviour.

Access to the entirety of the roof void was not possible due to access difficulties. However, the sections inspected demonstrated the construction of the roof and provided enough information to enable the accurate categorisation of the building.

4. Results

4.1. Bats

The house was brick built with all external walls rendered. The roof was slated with clay ridge tiles on the main ridge with lead flashing over hipped ridges and around chimney stacks. Wooden soffit boxes were present on all elevations with wooden framed windows present.

There was no evidence of bat present around the building exterior, however, a number of Potential Roost Features (PRFs)/roost access points were noted, comprising:

- Gaps beneath slates (**Photograph 2**).
- Gaps at ridge tiles (**Photograph 2**).
- Gaps around lead flashing (**Photograph 2**).
- Damage to soffit boxes (**Photograph 3**).

The roof void was inspected. The accessible areas were either lined with bitumen felt or 1F lining over a wooden frame and loft floors are insulated with rock wool.

Within the accessible area of the void ten relatively old scattered bat droppings were present (**Photograph 3**), not obviously associated with any PRFs.

Given the presence of PRFs and old bat droppings, the house was assessed to be of **MODERATE POTENTIAL** for roosting bats (**Table 1**).

Photograph 2. Althrey Woodhouse



Photograph 3. Example damage to soffit boxes



Photograph 4. Bat dropping within roof void



4.2. Other Species

It was considered possible that nests could be present in areas that could not be accessed/viewed (e.g. within soffit boxes).

5. Conclusions and Required Actions

5.1. Bats

The PRA survey concluded that the building is of moderate suitability for roosting bats. A minimum of two nocturnal presence/absence (dusk 'emergence' and dawn 'return to roost') surveys are required prior to any works to evaluate if bats are entering/exiting the building at dawn/dusk, in addition to identifying bat species and numbers/type of roosts (if present).

All bat survey methods employed should be in line with the latest Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) survey guidance². The optimal time for emergence/re-entry surveys is between May and August (inclusive).

If, following these further bat surveys, the proposed works are determined to likely cause destruction/disturbance to any bat roosts then a EPS licence will need to be sought from NRW to enable the re-development works to proceed legally. This licence would need to detail how the works would avoid any harm to bats in addition to providing appropriate compensatory roosting sites.

5.2. Nesting Birds

The active nests of wild bird species (with certain exceptions) are legally protected from deliberate disturbance or destruction. Therefore, if works/vegetation clearance are proposed for the bird nesting season (March-August inclusive), it will be necessary to appoint a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE) to complete a check for active birds' nests in areas to be impacted. Should any active nests be found then it would be necessary to delay works until the nesting attempt has reached a natural conclusion. If works are planned for outside of the bird nesting period then no such check is necessary.

5.3. Enhancement Opportunities

Opportunities to enhance the site for bats and birds exist. Recommendations in relation to the types and locations of bat/bird boxes should be made when all surveys are complete.

5.4. Report Validity

The findings of this report are considered valid for up to 12 months from the date of this report³. If the required further surveys are delayed beyond this period, an updated PRA will be required.

³ CIEEM (2019). *Advice Note on The Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys* [online] available at: <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Advice-Note.pdf>