

No. 5 Dee Villas, Holt, Wrexham

Bat – Preliminary Roost Assessment

August 1st 2022

Produced by



www.wildbanksconservation.com

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The following report has been prepared by Wildbanks Conservation on behalf of Wrexham county borough council. It provides details of a bat – Preliminary Roost Assessment and nesting bird survey of No.5 Dee Villas, Holt. The property is to be re-roofed in 2022. The property is located at central OS grid reference SJ 41109 54228.

1.2 This report has been produced to inform the council of any restrictions in relation to presence of protected species with regard to the re-roofing works. The aims of the study were to:

- Identify any bat roosts within the residential dwellings that may be impacted by the proposed works
- Identify any nesting birds within the residential dwellings that may be impacted by the proposed works
- Provide recommendations for any necessary further survey work or licencing, as required
- Provide information on any mitigation and enhancement measures that should be employed during and works

2.0 Survey Methodology

Desktop Survey

2.1 Inspection, using colour 1:25,000 OS base maps (www.ordancesurvey.co.uk) and aerial photographs from Google Earth (www.maps.google.co.uk) was also undertaken in order to provide additional context and identify any features of potential importance for nature conservation in the wider countryside.

Bat Surveys

Building Survey

2.2 The property was subject to an external and internal Visual Assessment in daylight for evidence of roosting bats and/or features that had the potential to be used by bats. The survey was carried out by Mick Smith MCIEEM (NRW Bat license No. S089440/2).

2.3 Evidence of bat usage included; droppings, urine staining, feeding remains and the discovery of individual bats. Potential roosting/access points were also recorded. 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 area to access the building. Binoculars a high powered torch were used to assess the holes and gaps within the external roof structure and all possible areas were searched for evidence.

- 2.4 Where possible and safe to do so any holes with potential to be used by bats was visually inspected using an Autel digital inspection videoscope.
- 2.5 The residential building was then classified as offering negligible, low, moderate or high bat roost potential dependant on the features and/or evidence observed following guidelines set out in the BCT Good Practice Guidelines¹ (Bat Conservation Trust, Bat Surveys (2012) Good Practice Guidelines 2nd Edition)

Table 1. Bat building survey classification

Category (Potential value)	Description
No/negligible value	Buildings with no or very few features capable of supporting roosting bats. Often buildings are of 'sound' well-sealed structure, or have a single skin and no roof void. They tend to have high interior light-levels, and little or no insulation. Buildings without any roofs may also fall into this category.
Low Value	Buildings of largely unsuitable construction, but with few features of potential value to bats (e.g. gaps above windows, no supporting evidence found). Buildings may be surrounded by poor foraging habitat.
Moderate Value	Buildings usually of brick or stone construction with a number of features of obvious potential value to roosting bats e.g. loose roof / ridge tiles, gaps in brickwork, gaps under fascia boards, and/or warm sealed roof-spaces with under-felt.
High Value	Buildings with a large number of features of obvious potential value to bats (as above). Bats may be suspected to roost within the building (at least at certain times of year), but no supporting evidence found
Confirmed Roost	Bats discovered roosting within the building, or recorded emerging from / entering the building at dusk and/or dawn. Building found to contain conclusive evidence of occupation by bats, such as bat droppings. A confirmed record (as supplied by an established source such as the local bat group) would also apply to this category.

Bird Survey

Building Survey

- 2.6 The property was subject to an external search in daylight for evidence of nesting birds, and an assessment was made on the buildings as to whether it had a confirmed active birds nest, holes that could readily be used by birds even though no birds were seen using them ('possible') or no potential nesting sites ('absent').
- 2.7 The presence of nesting birds was established through seeing evidence of actual active nests/nest building behaviour or birds entering or exiting nesting sites. All holes that could potentially be used by birds were also noted.
- 2.8 Where possible and safe to do so any holes with potential to be used by birds was visually inspected using an Autel digital inspection videoscope.
- 2.9 Each property with a possible nesting site was also subject to an additional 30 minute activity survey. A surveyor watched the potential nest site for evidence of birds using it for a minimum of 30 minutes.
- 2.10 An assessment was then made on each building as to its use by birds. The property was categorized as follows
- 'Confirmed'. An active birds nest was confirmed at the property.
 - 'Possible'. Holes that could readily be used by birds were present but no birds were seen using them during the survey.
 - 'Absent'. No potential nesting sites were identified at the property.
- 2.11 It should be noted that the categorization system of the properties only represents the situation at the time of survey; birds may build nests or have a second brood between the initial assessment and the commencement of works.
- 2.12 All birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and therefore it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependant young of such a bird. If an active nesting site is confirmed, works cannot go ahead until the young have fledged and the nest is no longer in use. The time scale for this may differ and is dependent on the species recorded.

Constraints

- 2.13 Any ecological survey must be considered as a 'snapshot' of the species at the time of survey, with individual nests or small/occasional roosting sites having the potential to be missed.

- 2.14 However, no limitations were present during the survey and the results of this Report are considered a true reflection of how bats and birds are using the property.

3 SURVEY RESULTS

Desktop Study

- 3.1 The property is located on the outskirts of Holt in a semi rural setting. The wider landscape around holt is rural consisting of farmland with hedgerows and standard trees and isolated properties. No woodlands are located within 1km of the Site. The River Dee flows some 150m to the North East.

Figure 1: Site location



Building Survey

- 3.2 The external visual assessment of the property was conducted on the 29th July 2022 and carried out by Mick Smith MCIEEM (NRW Bat license No. S089440/2). The conditions during the survey were dry and sunny with minimal wind and no rain.
- 3.3 The property is a mid terrace small bungalow, constructed of brick with a tiled roof and redbrick chimney stacks (plates 1-5). A small flat roof veranda was present on the front of the property. The external gardens of the property were laid to lawn with some shrubs and flower beds.
- 3.4 Within the exterior of the property no gaps or features potentially useable by bats existed that could not be fully inspected. The roof was in excellent condition, there were no sections of missing mortar under ridge tiles, no broken/slipped or missing tiles or no gaps within the verge. There were no gaps within the brickwork, under lead flashing or within the soffit boxes. The building was extremely well sealed (plates 3-5).
- 3.5 Three slightly raised roof tiles were seen where the roof of No. 5 meets No. 6. From ladders these were inspected with binoculars and torch and did not go deep and had cobwebs within them and no evidence bats were using them.
- 3.6 The property at No. 5 Dee Villas has no evidence of nesting birds and no evidence of roosting bats or features to support these species.

Constraints

- 3.7 Any ecological survey must be considered as a 'snapshot' of the species at the time of survey, with individual nests or small/occasional roosting sites having the potential to be missed. Any building works undertaken should be carried out with care following appropriate best practice methods.

4.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 This Site has been subject to a bat Preliminary Roost Assessment survey on the 29th July 2022. No birds or bats were recorded roosting within the building. The property offers very limited features that could be used by roosting bats. Such features were limited to three raised roof tiles and these were assessed during the survey and were not of a depth or size to support bats.
- 4.2 The building is considered to hold negligible potential for roosting bats in accordance to BCT Guidelines 2016.
- 4.3 No evidence of existing nesting or potential nesting sites were identified during the survey and nesting birds are considered absent.
- 4.4 It is considered that there are no statutory constraints to the proposed development of this building from the presence of a bat roost or nesting birds. At present the re-development works can proceed on the site without any further survey or additional constraints in relation to bats or birds.
- 4.5 The re-roofing of the building does provide the opportunity for ecological enhancement measures within the new scheme and Biodiversity Net gain through the planning process and relevant legislation. As such the following recommendations are made
- 4.6 Installation of the following bird and bat boxes on the trees surrounding the grassed area adjacent to Dee Villas between Quakers Way and The Gardens at central grid reference SJ 41080 54129.
- 2 x Vincent Wildlife Trust bat boxes
 - 1 x 1B Schweglar 26mm diameter entrance hole boxes or similar
 - 1 x 1B Schweglar 32mm diameter entrance hole boxes or similar

5.0 REFERENECES

- 1 CIEEM (2013). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Winchester. CIEEM.
- 2 Collins, J (ed.). 2016. Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn). The Bat Conservation Trust. London.
- 3 Mitchell-Jones, A.J. 2004. Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough
- 4 Natural England (2010). European Protected Species and the Planning Process.
- 5 Planning Policy Wales Edition 10.

A1 APPENDIX – SITE PHOTOGRAPHS. Plates 1 – 4

A1.1 Plate 1 – Shows the front elevation, facing towards the East



A1.2 Plate 2 – Shows the rear elevation, facing towards the West.



A1.3 **Plate 3** – Shows the well sealed verge on the Southern aspect



A1.4 **Plate 4** – Showing the very well sealed soffit box



A1.5 **Plate 5** – Shows the very tightly sealed ceiling of the veranda. No access points for bats or birds



A2 **APPENDIX – RELEVANT LEGISLATION & PLANNING POLICY IN RELATION TO BAT SPECIES**

Relevant Legislation

- A2.1 Due to recent declines in bat species’ populations within the United Kingdom, all bat species and their roost sites in Britain are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are also included on Annex IV of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21st May 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (known as the Habitats Directive). As a result of the United Kingdom ratifying this directive, all British bats are protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Under this legislation it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or capture or intentionally (or recklessly in England and Wales) disturb bats or obstruct access to, damage or destroy bat roosts.
- A2.2 Under the law, a bat roost is any structure or place used for shelter or protection e.g. a building, bridge or tree. Bats use many roost sites and feeding areas throughout the year and since they tend to re-use the same roosts for generations these sites are protected whether bats are present or not.
- A2.3 Any activity resulting in a contravention of the legislation described above would require a Natural England licence to avoid committing an offence. Natural England issue licences for the purposes of:
- “preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial”.
- A2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out how the planning system should contribute to and enhance nature conservation and the local environment. This is to be achieved through a combination of local planning policies as well as through the determination of planning applications with the aim of minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

- A2.5 As such it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent to which they are affected by proposals is established prior to planning permission being granted. Furthermore, where protected species are present and proposals may result in harm to the species or its habitat, steps should be taken to ensure the long-term protection of the species, such as through attaching appropriate planning conditions for example.
- A2.5 In addition to legislation, there are national and local planning policies pertaining to the protection of biodiversity. Planning Policy Wales Edition 10 makes provision for Biodiversity and Ecological Networks, supported by The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which introduced an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty on Local Authorities to consider the need to:
- support the conservation of biodiversity, in particular the conservation of wildlife and habitats;
 - ensure action in Wales contributes to meeting international responsibilities and obligations for biodiversity and habitats;
 - ensure statutorily and non-statutorily designated sites are properly protected and managed;
 - safeguard protected and priority species and existing biodiversity assets from impacts which directly affect their nature conservation interests and compromise the resilience of ecological networks and the components which underpin them, such as water and soil, including peat; and
 - secure enhancement of and improvements to ecosystem resilience by improving diversity, condition, extent and connectivity of ecological networks.