

No. 2 Dee Villas, Holt, Wrexham

Bat and Nesting Bird Survey Report

August 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, nocturnal bat survey and nesting bird survey of No.2 Dee Villas, Holt. The property is to be re-roofed in 2022. The property is located at central OS grid reference SJ 41108 54199.

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.

Bat Emergence Survey

- 2.6.1 Following the external and internal visual assessment, one emergence survey was undertaken on the building to observe any potential bats roosting in the building not identified during the visual assessment. The surveys were carried out by two experienced bat surveys led by Jack Halpin, 5 years experience in conducting bat

surveys and accredited agent on Mick Smith NRW bat license (S089440/2). Surveyors were positioned strategically so that good coverage of all aspects of the building was achieved. The surveys were undertaken within the optimum time for bat activity (May-September) and under optimum conditions.

- 2.6.2 The surveyors each used an Anabat Walkabout with the additional aid of a FLIR SCION thermal monocular. Any recordings were analysed using Analook Insight.
- 2.6.3 The surveys were undertaken following methodology set out in the Bat Conservation Trust Handbook Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016).

Bird Survey

Building Survey

- 2.7 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').
- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 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.

- 2.13 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

- 2.14 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.
- 2.15 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 175m 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 semi detached small bungalow in a close line of other similar properties, constructed of brick with a tiled roof and redbrick chimney stacks (plates 1-8). 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 The exterior of the property is largely well sealed and well maintained however a small number of features potentially useable by bats existed. The roof was in overall good condition but with three small sections of missing mortar under ridge tiles. A gap within the verge on the Southern aspect was also noted and a gap onto the wall plate between the soffit (plate 5) was also present.
- 3.5 No 2 Dee Villas is occupied, no survey through the living rooms was carried out. A survey of the loft space was undertaken. Internally the roof is well constructed and the roof membrane is in good condition. No live bats, bat droppings or other evidence of bat use was seen within the loft
- 3.6 The property at No. 2 Dee Villas has small numbers of features that could be used by bats.
- 3.7 The external assessment of the building did not identify any features that could have been utilised by nesting birds

Emergence Survey

- 3.8.1 One bat emergence survey was undertaken on the dusk of 10/08/22. One bat activity survey was undertaken due the building being classified as having low potential for bats, this is in line with best practise guidelines published by Bat Conservation Trust.
- 3.8.2 The following table provides details of the surveys undertaken.

Date	Survey type	Time started	Time finished	Sunrise/Sunset time	Temperature	Weather conditions
10/08/22	Dusk	20:34	22:19	21:07	21C	Hot and still and clear skies

- 3.8.3 *Dusk survey 17th May 2021*
The Survey was undertaken by Jack Halpin and Tanya Cobb, each surveyor was positioned to be able to view all aspects of the building and cover all PRF's.
- 3.8.4 No bats were seen emerging from the building during the survey, bat activity was low with only a small number of passes recorded throughout the night. The first

bat was a Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) at 21:20hrs and was recorded foraging intermittently within the back garden until 21:40hrs. Noctule bat (*Nyctalus noctula*) was also recorded foraging high above the property on a number of occasions through the survey until 22:00hrs. Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) was also occasionally recorded commuting along the front of the property.

4.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Bats

4.1.1 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 limited features that could be used by roosting bats. Such features included missing mortar under ridge tiles, a small gap within the verge on the eastern aspect and a gap onto the wall plate.

4.1.2 The building is considered to hold low potential for roosting bats in accordance to BCT Guidelines 2016 as such a dusk emergence survey was carried out on the 10/8/22.

4.1.3 No bats or evidence of bats were recorded roosting within the building during the PRA or the dusk emergence survey. The bats recorded during the dusk survey commuted on to the Site or were commuting across in front of the site.

Recommendations

4.1.4 It is considered that there are no statutory constraints to the proposed development of this building from the presence of a bat roost. At present the re-development works can proceed on the site without any further survey or additional constraints in relation to bats or birds. However, it should be noted that bats are transient by nature and in the unlikely event that bats are found during the works; all works must immediately stop and a licenced ecologist must be called. A licence may then be required from Natural Resources Wales before works can continue.

4.1.5 As features have been identified and the potential for bats to use the building as an occasional roost in small numbers in the future cannot be discounted. In order to protect bats in the unlikely event that any are present at the time of works, as Toolbox Talk should be prepared and given to contractors undertaking the re-roofing works prior to works commencing.

4.2 Birds

4.2.1 No evidence of existing bird nesting or potential nesting sites were identified during the survey and nesting birds are considered absent. No further work with regards to nesting birds is required

4.3 Ecological Enhancement

4.3.1 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

4.3.2 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 – 8

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 potential roost feature of slightly raised flashing.



A1.4 **Plate 4** – Shows potential roost feature of gap under ridge tiles



A1.5 **Plate 5** – Shows potential roof feature above wall plate



A1.6 **Plate 6** – Shows well sealed soffit box and wall plate



A1.7 **Plate 7** – Shows well sealed soffit box and wall plate



A1.8 **Plate 8** – Shows internal roof structure.



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.