

Technical Report

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Plot 5 Plas Power, Wrexham Road

Mr J Beckett-Ward Supplies

17 October 2018



Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Terms of Reference	1
1.2	Site Description	1
1.3	Objectives of this Report	1
2	Relevant Legislation	2
2.1	Bats	2
2.2	Breeding Birds	2
3	Survey Methodology	3
3.1	Preliminary bat roost assessment	3
3.1.1	Limitations	3
3.2	Bird assessment	3
4	Survey Results	4
4.1	Bats	4
4.1.1	Building	4
4.1.2	Surrounding habitat	4
4.2	Birds	4
5	Evaluation and Recommendations	6
5.1	Bats	6
5.2	Birds	6
	Appendices	7
	Appendix A. Images and further information	7
	Tables	
	Table 1: BCT bat roost categories	3

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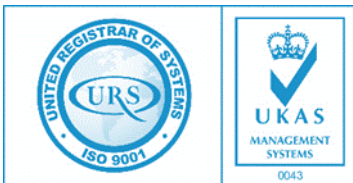
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1 Introduction

1.1 Terms of Reference

Atmos Consulting Ltd ('Atmos') were commissioned in August 2018 by Mr J Beckett-Ward to undertake a bat and bird assessment of Plot 5 at the Plas Power Estate, Wrexham Road, near Coedpoeth in the County Borough of Wrexham.

Plot 5, alongside several other buildings formerly part of the Plas Power Estate, has planning permission for residential conversion. Previous surveys undertaken in 2007 as part of the planning process identified the presence of bats, therefore this survey was commissioned to determine the current status of Plot 5 and to determine whether any further surveys would be required.

1.2 Site Description

Plot 5 is located on the Plas Power Estate, which lies to the east of Coedpoeth, a large village within the County Borough of Wrexham. A single building, thought to be a disused workshop, lies on the plot and has a central national grid reference (NGR) of SJ 30393 50664. The plot is predominantly comprised of bare ground, with wooden fencing around the boundary. The Plas Power Estate, on which the plot is located, is comprised of occupied residential buildings and further disused farm buildings, many of which are proposed for residential conversion. The estate lies directly south of the A525 and is surrounded by improved grassland and arable fields with hedgerows and areas of broadleaved woodland.

1.3 Objectives of this Report

The objectives of the survey were to determine the potential of the building to provide habitat for roosting bats and nesting birds, to search for any direct evidence of bats and to determine whether roosting bats are present within the buildings.

The results of the survey are presented with the following details:

- Legislative context;
- field survey methodology;
- field survey results; and
- evaluation and recommendations.

2 Relevant Legislation

2.1 Bats

All bat species in the England and Wales are protected through the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended); the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000; the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC, 2006); and by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017). Bats are commonly referred to as European Protected Species (EPS).

It is an offence to deliberately or recklessly:

- capture, injure or kill a bat;
- harass an individual or group of bats;
- disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection;
- disturb a bat while it is rearing or otherwise caring for its young;
- obstruct access to a breeding site or resting place, or otherwise deny the animal use of the breeding site or resting place;
- disturb a bat in a manner that is, or in circumstances which are, likely to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species to which it belongs;
- disturb a bat in a manner that is, or in circumstances which are, likely to impair its ability to survive, breed or reproduce, or rear or otherwise care for its young;
- disturb a bat while it is migrating or hibernating;

It is also an offence of strict liability to:

- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat even if they are not in use at the time (i.e. a summer roost during the winter period).

2.2 Breeding Birds

Nesting birds and their nests receive protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which makes it an offence to intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built.

3 Survey Methodology

3.1 Preliminary bat roost assessment

A daytime survey of the building was undertaken by a Natural Resources Wales (NRW) licensed bat ecologist (licence number 79290: OTH:CSAB:2018) on the 8th August 2018. The building was subject to a preliminary roost assessment as detailed in the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) survey guidelines (Collins, 2016). This involved a detailed external and, where possible, an internal inspection to look for entry/exit points for bats and any potential roosting features, such as gaps in roofing tiles/slate and openings within soffits and roof valleys. A search was also conducted for any evidence of roosting bat presence; including presence of bats, bat droppings, and urine/fur oil staining.

The potential of the buildings to host roosting bats was then categorised as per the criteria within the BCT survey guidelines, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: BCT bat roost categories

Potential suitability	Key features
Negligible	Negligible habitat features not likely to be used by roosting bats
Low	A structure 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 and or suitable foraging/commuting habitat to be used on a regular basis or by large numbers of bats
Medium	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size and surrounding habitat but which are unlikely to support a roost of high conservation importance
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by large numbers of bats on a regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time owing to their size and surrounding habitat
Confirmed roost	A building supporting evidence of bat presence, such as droppings and feeding remains.

3.1.1 Limitations

The ground floor of the building was fully accessible during the preliminary roost assessment and could be thoroughly surveyed for potential roosting features and evidence of bat presence. Although the second floor of the building could be accessed, there were some floorboards which were considered to be structurally unsound and so the survey was limited around these areas due to concerns about safety.

3.2 Bird assessment

Alongside the bat roost assessment, a search for evidence of nesting birds was also undertaken. This involved looking for nests on the outside and inside of the building and, if present, assessing their age and whether they have been recently used.

4 Survey Results

4.1 Bats

4.1.1 Building

The building is thought to be a former workshop, which is currently unused and in a state of disrepair. It is a two-storey building with a pitched slate roof and sandstone brick sides, along with a single-storey lean-to at its western side. There is an open space running through the ground floor towards the middle of the building, which may have been used as a car-port or similar when the building was in use. The building has a number of wooden doors to the ground floor and windows on the first and second floor, which had closed wooden shutters or were boarded up at the time of the survey.

Externally, the building is considered to provide a number of potential bat roosting features and potential entry points into the internal space in the building. There are numerous gaps and cavities between the sandstone bricks, which have the potential to support cavity roosting bat species such as pipistrelle *Pipistrellus* spp. The western gable end and the southern side of the building have large numbers of these gaps and they are also present on the northern side of the building. The eastern gable end of the building had no obvious gaps in the brickwork at the time of the survey, with the wall being in a relatively good condition. There are a number of further potential entry points through which bats could enter into the building, including holes in the roof, missing slates, open doorways and slits in the brickwork. The walls of the building supported patchy ivy cover in places, particularly on the eastern end, however this was mostly dead at the time of the survey and was not considered to provide sufficient shelter and protection for roosting bats.

Internally, the building is comprised of two-storeys, both with exposed brick sides. On the first floor this exposed brick provides numerous gaps and cavities in which bats could roost, particularly on the southern side of the building, whilst the sandstone sides on the ground floor are relatively well-sealed. There were signs of bat presence identified on the first floor of the building, with bat droppings and feeding remains recorded towards the middle of the building.

The building is considered to have high suitability for bats and is considered to be a confirmed roost site due to the presence of bat droppings and feeding remains.

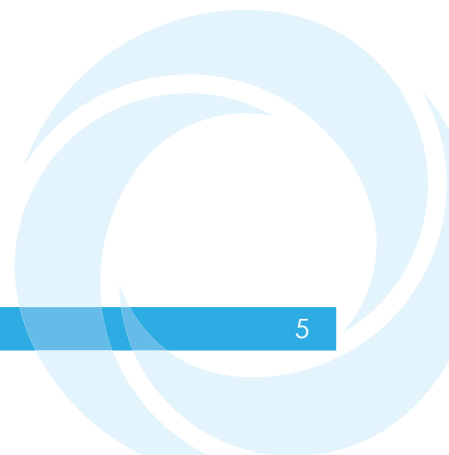
4.1.2 Surrounding habitat

The landscape in which the building lies is considered to provide high quality foraging habitat, with areas of broadleaved woodland to the west and farmland with hedgerows and scattered trees comprising the majority of the surrounding area.

4.2 Birds

The building is considered to provide potential nesting spaces for breeding birds, including the exposed rafters within the building and the cracks within the sandstone brickwork, which are present both internally and externally. During the survey, swallow *Hirundo rustica* nests were recorded on exposed beams on the ground floor of the eastern side of the building. The building lies on a plot of land which was comprised of

bare earth and spoil at the time of survey and so this immediate surrounding habitat was not considered to offer any potential habitat for nesting birds, although this may change if the land is left to unmanaged over time and becomes vegetated.



5 Evaluation and Recommendations

5.1 Bats

The building is considered to have a high suitability for roosting bats and, due to the presence of bat droppings and feeding signs, is considered to be a confirmed roost site. The building provides a number of potential roosting spaces, both internally and externally, and is considered suitable for use by a range of bat species on a regular basis and throughout the year.

Based on the evidence of bat presence found within the building, it is recommended that further activity surveys are carried out in line with the BCT's 'roost characterisation' methodology. This requires three surveys to be undertaken to observe bats which may be roosting within the building, with at least one of these surveys undertaken at dawn. Each survey should be separated by a period of at least two weeks. Following the surveys, we will advise as to the bats found present and the mitigation required to enable the building to be developed into a residential dwelling. It is likely that a development licence will be required from NRW prior to works commencing.

5.2 Birds

There were a number of swallow nests present on the ground floor of the building at the time of the survey and the building is considered to provide potential nesting habitat for further species. It is therefore recommended that any works are undertaken outside of the typical bird breeding season (March to August, inclusive) to ensure that no active nests are disturbed or destroyed. If this is not practical then a nesting bird check should be carried out prior to any work commencing. If any active nests are found then building work would have to be delayed until the young have fledged and are no longer dependent and using the nest. It is recommended that replacement nesting habitat, such as nesting platforms or artificial swallow nests, is provide and could be incorporated into the converted building design or integrated with any bat mitigation features (e.g. a bat house).

Appendices

Appendix A. Images and further information

Image	Description
	The northern facing side of the building. The building is comprised of sandstone brick sides and has a damaged slate roof. There is an opening that runs through the middle of the building on the ground floor, which can be seen in this image and is thought to be a disused car port. The ground floor of the building is open to the east of this opening (left on image) and is closed to the west, with a door providing access. On the first floor is a dormer style opening providing open access to the first floor.
	Dead ivy on the eastern gable end of the building. This vegetation is considered too sparse to provide any bat roosting potential and is unlikely to provide sufficient shelter for nesting birds in its current condition.
	Gaps within the sandstone brickwork on the southern facing side of the building. These gaps are considered to provide suitable roosting space for crevice-dwelling bats species and some of these gaps may also provide access into the internal space of the building.

Image	Description
	The western gable end of the building and single-storey lean-to with a damaged roof.
	The ground floor of the building. This floor is considered to have less potential for roosting bats as there are less gaps suitable cavities in the brickwork.
	The first floor of the building. Gaps within the sandstone bricks are considered to provide potential roosting space for bat species.
	The damaged roof of the building.

Image	Description
	Bat droppings found on the second-storey floor of the building.
	Butterfly wings found in the first floor of the building and considered likely to be evidence of bats feeding within the building.
	Swallow nests found on the ground floor of the building.