

Wrexham County Borough Council
Planning Department

Our ref: 26613 R2 Rev1

Linden House
Unit 4, Mold Business Park
Wrexham Road
Mold
CH7 1XP

26/08/2021

T: 01352 744 512
E: mold@atmosconsulting.com
www.atmosconsulting.com

Dear Planning Officer,

Proposed Extension to Ysgol y Hafod, Bangor Road, Johnstown

This letter sets out the approach to bats as part of the planning submission for the proposed extension to Ysgol y Hafod, Bangor Road, Johnstown, LL14 2SW.

Bat surveys are ongoing at the site and the final survey is scheduled to be completed after the planning submission. A report will be prepared and submitted to Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) in the determination period upon completion of the surveys.

In order to support the planning submission, a summary of the current findings and proposed approach in respect of bats is provided.

Background Information

A daytime internal and external Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PBRA) was originally undertaken in 19th August 2019 by Marches Ecology on behalf of WCBC. This found seven old (> 1 year) droppings within the roof space of the original school building and several potential access points in the roof space. The loft spaces of the original school building were complex and restrictive, and not suitable for the typical breeding or roosting requirements for loft-dwelling species such as brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*. Habitat for crevice-dwelling bats such as pipistrelle *Pipistrellus* species was present, and it is possible the building is used by single / low numbers as an occasional / transient roost.

The original building and newer rear extension were subject to dusk surveys in August and September 2019 and no bats were recorded to emerge either building. The original school building had therefore once supported bats, but they were not considered to be present at the time of the survey.

At the time, the extension proposals were to affect the newer rear extension only. No works were confirmed within the original school building, although internal refurbishments were mentioned to be possible.

The report (Marches Ecology Ref. C411/Bat Surveys/V1.0) recommended that should the works not commence within 12 months of the date of the inspection / surveys, updated surveys may be required.

Current Approach

On 4th August 2021, a telephone consultation was carried out with Emma Broad, the with WCBC County Ecologist. It was agreed that an updated PBRA be carried out to ascertain whether site conditions (and thus suitability for bats) had changed in the intervening time. If conditions had not changed, no further surveys would be required.

Updated PBRA

An updated internal and external PBRA was carried out by an ecologist experienced in bat ecology on 17th August 2021. This found the newer rear extension to remain of low suitability for bats. The original school building presented numerous potential features, in particular gaps at the roof verge, ridge tiles, louvers and under slates and was assessed as medium suitability.

Furthermore, since the 2019 surveys, the development proposals had been updated such that works to the internal ceilings of the original school building are now confirmed. This means there is now potential for the roof space to be disturbed during the works, therefore bats, if present, could be disturbed.

This was a change from the approach in 2019. Therefore, roost surveys of the original school building were undertaken on the basis of it being a confirmed roost (due to droppings) requiring three visits in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidance.

Updated Bat Roost Surveys

The first dusk bat emergence survey was undertaken on 18th August 2021 by three ecologists experienced in bat survey. The survey commenced 15 minutes prior to sunset and continued for 1.5 hours afterwards. During the survey, bat activity was very low, but one bat was recorded to emerge from the south-facing aspect of the original school building from one of the dormer-style roof protrusions, likely to be a pipistrelle.

At the time of writing, two further surveys will be undertaken, the second is provisionally planned for the week of 30th August, and the final for the week of 13th September, weather dependent.

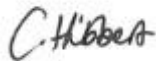
Bat Survey Report

The results will be compiled into a Bat Survey Report which will be submitted following the final bat survey visit. The report will include an impact assessment, an assessment of the effects of the works on the conservation status of the bat species, and proposals for mitigation.

The works to reconfigure the ceilings in the original school building will not result in a permanent loss of roosting habitat. They will cause temporary disturbance. It is therefore considered (on the basis of the current survey results) that a disturbance licence could be obtained from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for the works (following granting of planning permission) to cover temporary disturbance, but with long-term retention of the roost.

If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,



Catherine Hibbert
Technical Director, Ecology South
07827 343461
Catherine.hibbert@atmosconsulting.com