

Table of Contents

1. Introduction and Reasons for Survey.....	
2. Protected Species.....	
3. Protected species in Wrexham	
4. Survey Methodology	
5. Constraints	
6. Results.....	
7. Conclusions.....	
8. Recommendations & Implications.....	

APPENDIX I - Site Photographs

APPENDIX II – Suggestions for bats & House sparrows

1.0 Introduction & Reason for Survey

- 1.1 As part of a Planning Application at The Mitre Vaults Public House, Wrexham, an inspection and assessment was undertaken in relation to bats and breeding birds, Platt White Partnership, commissioned the inspection and report on behalf of their client. It is understood that the proposals for the site involves change of use of the Public House into student accommodation. As part of the Local Authority's Planning Policies ecological surveys are generally required, particularly where a specially protected species is or may be present and could be affected by the proposals for which the Application seeks consent.
- 1.2 The aim of the inspection was to initially ascertain if the property is of value to bats or breeding birds, if the building was found to be suitable for bats or signs of use were located then more detailed surveys would be recommended by way of nocturnal surveys. If bats were subsequently found during those detailed surveys and may be affected by the work then a Welsh Assembly Mitigation Licence would be required to proceed with the development.
- 1.3 The optimum time to investigate buildings for evidence of a bat roost is May – August, however that is not to say they cannot be inspected and assessed outside of that time and frequently the results can be conclusive, which can save time and expense for Planning Applicants but it should be borne in mind that equally the inspection can be inconclusive. If potential was found to be high or the results of the survey were inconclusive then recommendations would indicate the requirement for nocturnal observations to be undertaken at the site during the breeding season of bats. (May – August)

2.0 Protected Species

- 2.1 All British bats and their roosts are afforded protection under the 1981 Wildlife & Countryside Act (as amended) and are listed in Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010. When dealing with cases where a European Protected Species (all UK bats) may be affected, a planning authority is a competent authority within the meaning of the Regulation 7 of the 2010 Regulations and therefore has a statutory duty to have due regard to the provisions of the Regulations in the exercise of its functions.
- 2.2 Many European Protected Species licence applications relate to developments, which are subject to planning permission. Guidance on the consideration that local planning authorities should give to nature conservation interest is contained in Planning Guidance (Wales) Technical Advice Note (Wales) 5 2009. The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) is the agency responsible for advising central and local government within the Welsh Assembly on nature conservation. Where developments may affect protected species or their habitat CCW will need to be consulted, particularly where development takes place at or near a designated site of conservation or importance.
- 2.3 Mitigation proposals may be significant when considering the impact of planning applications upon European protected species. Reducing the impact or providing alternative habitat within or near to the development site may enable the favourable conservation status of the species concerned to be maintained. It is the developer's responsibility to produce a mitigation plan, normally through a suitable consultant. It is not CCW's role to produce mitigation proposals on behalf of developers, though it can advise Local Planning Authorities of their suitability and give general advice to developers.

- 2.3 Furthermore where bat/s or a roost** may be affected by development then a licence to derogate from the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 would be required. Licences applications in Wales are processed and issued by the Welsh Assembly subject to certain criterion being met.

2.4 Use of Buildings by Bats

- a) Summer breeding roost.
- b) Hibernation.
- c) Transitional or temporary roost.

Roost selection is often closely correlated to suitable foraging habitat within a reasonable commuting distance from the roost and different sites are used depending upon insect densities and abundance, climatic conditions can also affect their ability to successfully forage. All British bats are insectivorous.

** The term roost is generically referred to as a place that bat/s use for the any of the above reasons, however it should be noted that under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 (Regulation 41) the term roost is not used but refers to “a *breeding site or resting place of such an animal*” which essentially is the same and is afforded legal protection. The roost, breeding site or resting place of bats, which ever terminology is used is legally protected whether or not bats are in occupation.

- 2.5 All wild birds (with only minor exceptions) and their nests whilst being built or containing eggs or dependant young are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Birds listed on Schedule 1 e.g. Peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) are afforded a greater level of protection. Where nesting birds are present then work should be timed outside of the nesting season (March – August) or re-scheduled so as to avoid potential damage to an occupied nest and subsequently committing an offence.

3.0 Protected Species in Wrexham

- 3.1 Up to eight bat species have been recorded in the Wrexham area most of which use built structures, notably occupied residential properties, for roosting. The most frequently encountered species is the Pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus*) and its abundant status in Wrexham is reflected throughout the UK.
- 3.2 Some species of Schedule 1 listed birds, such as Peregrine falcon will use buildings within town or city centres and they have previously used buildings in Wrexham for nesting.

4.0 Survey Methodology

- 4.1 The survey was undertaken on the 10th May 2011 by an experienced bat surveyor acting as an accredited agent to Mr S. Irwin CCW Licence No: OTH:CSAB:126:2009 when the building that is to be converted was inspected for potential places that may be of value to bats, and if evidence of use was present. The building previously contained a loft space, but ceilings have been removed prior to the survey being undertaken; therefore the investigation mainly focussed on external elevations and an assessment made about the potential that may have been present prior to the removal of the ceiling. The external elevations were inspected, with the aid of close focussing binoculars and high powered torch for places that are frequently used by bats as roosts or as access into roost chambers or evidence of use i.e. bat droppings.

4.2 The survey was conducted at a time when bats will generally have returned to their summer roosts to form maternity colonies, which is the optimum time to investigate buildings/structures for evidence of use. Following the survey the results, conclusions and recommendations are based upon surveyor experience and knowledge of bat ecology.

4.3 A number of factors are used for the survey methodology, which include:-

Knowledge of bat species relevant to the site location
Nature of the immediate and surrounding habitat in relation to foraging opportunities
Condition of the building
Presence/absence of roost potential
Value of roost potential – if present

4.4 During the survey the surrounding habitat was assessed in relation to bats as very often roost selection is closely correlated with the surrounding habitat; the exterior of the building was inspected for signs of nesting birds. In addition static observations took place over one hour to ascertain evidence of nest building, feeding of young or change over of incubation duties by adult birds.

5.0 Constraints

5.1 The survey was conducted within the breeding season of bats, which is the optimum time to conduct surveys. However, as the ceilings have now been removed access into a loft could not be achieved but in relation to assessing the level of bat roost potential a full appraisal of the building was achievable. Therefore, although survey constraints were present, they were not to a degree that would completely restrict a sufficient amount of information being gathered on which to base conclusions and recommendations.

5.2 The inspection for nesting birds was conducted in tandem with the investigation for bats when many will birds will be within their main breeding season.

6.0 Results

6.1 The Mitre Vaults Public House is located in a built up urban environment approximately 0.40 kilometres from Wrexham town centre. The building for which the survey has been undertaken is a large engineered brick construction currently unoccupied and redundant from its former use. During the inspection it is clear that the building has undergone a complete internal 'strip' prior to the survey being undertaken. The immediate and surrounding habitat is represented by predominantly retail and industrial structures with residential dwellings located to the east of the site; minimal trees and ornamental shrubs are present within the immediate vicinity, however, a small wooded area is present approximately 0.25 kilometres south west of the plot within the recreational Bellevue Park.

- 6.2 Some of the nearby features identified will provide foraging/commuting opportunities and can be considered as being of some value for the crevice dwelling Pipistrelle bat, (*Pipistrellus*) which is the most frequently occurring species in urban areas. Where such habitat is present close to buildings then the percentage use of those buildings, by bats, increases given that roost opportunities are available. The breeding roosts of Pipistrelle bats are proportionally higher in occupied residential dwellings where the warm, dry conditions favour the requirements of a maternity colony but other unheated structures are also used, especially for hibernation or by male bats which do not need the same thermal conditions as a maternity colony.
- 6.3 The former Public House occupies a corner location adjoining a two storey structure at the north elevation; it is three storeys and it appears that before the ceilings were removed the loft space was to dimensions of approximately 14 metres long, 7 metres wide x 2 metres high, which would therefore, in principle, offer potential for loft dwelling bats; typically Brown Long Eared, (*Plecotus auritus*) or Horseshoe bats, (*Rhinolophus*) which are species that show a preference for large roof spaces that allows unrestricted free flight. However, although some of the habitat may be suitable for Pipistrelle species there is an absence of woodland, tree lines or connecting linear features within close proximity to the structure that would make the habitat suitable for specific foraging requirements of loft dwelling species. Where possible to do so the remaining beams and internal walls within the exposed roof space were inspected by ladder and torch light for evidence of bat use. It was found that the roof beams are heavily cobwebbed with no signs of recent disturbance and no recent or historic evidence of bat species was noted; however evidence of crevice dwelling bats within roof spaces is not always present.
- 6.5 Whilst investigating the interior of the former Public House it was noted that underfelt or sarking boards are absent beneath the roof slates and as a result roost potential for crevice dwelling bats is significantly reduced in this area as they are often found roosting between the two materials, subject to external access being available.
- 6.6 The external investigation revealed that typical places favoured by crevice dwelling bats such as soffit, barge and fascia boards are absent on all elevations of the building. Although there are some gaps between the slates and at eaves level, the potential for bats is considered to be low due to the absence of underfelt beneath the roof slates, thus crevice dwelling bats, such as Pipistrelle would not have a favoured roost site. Additionally due to the age and construction of the building a cavity wall is not present, which will further reduce roost potential for bats within the former Public House. Throughout the external investigation bat droppings were not located on walls windows or doors.
- 6.7 In relation to nesting birds no recent or historic evidence was observed during the survey. On the day of the survey House sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) were observed around the building; one pair was conclusively identified as using the adjoining building, which is not part of the current Planning Application. However, House Sparrows were noted perching on a ledge that exists at eaves level under the guttering of the Mitre Vaults along with faecal remains but nesting could not be conclusively identified from ground level but the birds were not observed frequently entering or leaving an opening. The House sparrow is on the UK Red List of birds that are of conservation concern due to a significant population reduction. Additionally, bird faeces are present on a chimney stack; chimney openings are frequently used by Jackdaws (*Corvus monedula*) and on occasions Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*), however, neither species were observed in the locality of the building or seen entering/exiting the chimney.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 From the survey results it can be concluded that although a large loft space was originally present it is now absent, it is considered that due to the immediate and surrounding habitat it would not have held any realistic potential for loft dwelling bats as the habitat does not meet their specific foraging requirements and therefore, the conversion or habitable use of the roof space would have no impact upon these species.
- 8.2 Typical places, favoured by crevice dwelling bats, on the exterior of the structure, such as soffit, barge and fascia boards are absent; additionally underfelt is absent beneath the roof slates and a cavity wall does not exist within a structure of this age and construction, therefore, the building does not have any notable potential for crevice dwelling bats and the conversion would have no impact upon these species.
- 8.3 It can also be concluded that based on the results of the inspection the proposed conversion of the former Public House will not result in the loss of high value bat roost potential or foraging habitat and nocturnal observations or any additional bat surveys will not be required.
- 8.4 There are no current implications in relation to specially protected bird species that would prevent the conversion of the building taking place and the proposals would not result in the loss of a site that is used by Schedule 1 birds for breeding.
- 8.5 From the inspection and assessment of the site it can be concluded that the building may offer some potential for House Sparrows, Starlings and Jackdaws, by way of typical nest places for these species.

9.0 Recommendations & Implications

- 9.1 As roost potential is absent for loft and crevice dwelling bats, there are no specific implications in relation to bats and the proposed work that is included within the current application. The retention or creation of a loft space would usually be of value if the habitat was suitable for loft dwelling bats, however this is not the case at the site, therefore it will not be recommended although suggestions are contained in Appendix II for crevice dwelling bats and advice on their location can be provide by the ecologist, whilst investigating for the presence of nesting birds once the scaffold is in place.
- 9.2 Nesting House Sparrows have been identified at the site and are on the Red List of species with high conservation concerns; they are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) therefore if it is established that they are nesting at the building time implications may arise as work, that may affect the nest or cause undue disturbance, cannot commence whilst nesting is in progress. As scaffolding is currently being erected around the building, it is recommended that once complete, a further inspection is conducted to inspect the ledge beneath the guttering for the presence of nests and further advice offered if nesting is confirmed; additionally during the visit the chimney will also be investigated for any recent evidence of nesting activity or potential for bat use.
- 9.3 It will be of conservation value if nesting opportunities are provided by way of nest boxes for House sparrows and advice on their location can be provided by the ecologist for this purpose. House sparrows are typically colonial nesting species; therefore nest boxes should be located in relatively close proximity to each other.

APPENDIX I Site Photographs



The Mitre Vault Pub proposed for conversion



Ceilings removed prior to survey being undertaken



Scaffolding currently being erected & ledge under gutter that could provide opportunities for nesting birds

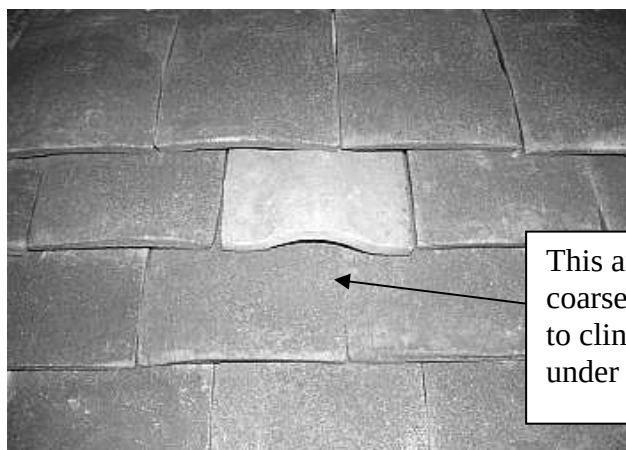
APPENDIX II Bat Roost & House Sparrow Suggestions



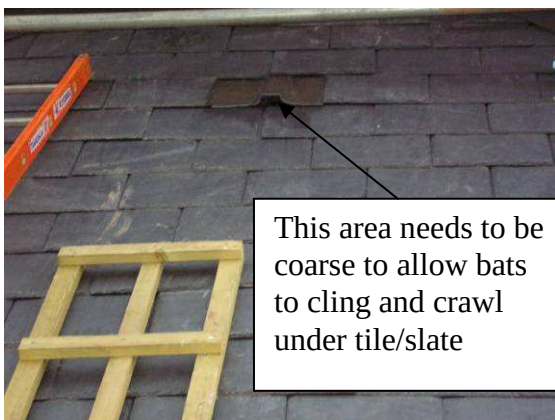
Access in ridge tiles



1FQ bat box



This area needs to be coarse to allow bats to cling and crawl under tile/slate



This area needs to be coarse to allow bats to cling and crawl under tile/slate



Nest boxes for House sparrows