

The Graigs

Lower Wych, Malpas, Cheshire

Preliminary Roost Assessment and bird survey

January 2021

Produced by



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REPORT VERIFICATION AND DECLARATION OF COMPLIANCE

Report Version	Date	Completed by:	Checked by:	Approved by:
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The information we have prepared is true and we confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

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C O N T E N T S:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Survey Methodology
- 3.0 Results
- 4.0 Discussion, Recommendations and Summary
- 5.0 Legislation
- 6.0 References

Appendices

- A1 Site Photographs – plates 1-11

Figures

- Fig 1: Site plan split into sections
- Fig 2: Aerial photo of development site (1:300)
- Fig 3: Aerial photo of development site (1:3000)

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The report has been prepared on behalf Mr and Mrs Probin and provides the results of a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment of a single-story mixed construction garage block, with attached store and a rear hall leading to a residential property, conducted on 6th January 2021. A survey for the potential use for breeding birds was also undertaken at the same time. The development Site is at The Graigs, Lower Wych, Malpas, Cheshire.
- 1.2 The proposed development site is in a rural setting to the South West of Malpas. Attached to the structure is a residential property and a large steel agricultural shed to the east and a construction site for a property renovation immediately to the south. Further afield, the surrounding habitat consists of mixed agricultural fields with hedgerows and the Shothill and Wych Brook.
- 1.3 Development proposals for the site are for the demolition of the existing structures and for them to be replaced on a similar footprint by an extension of the house and the creation of separate garage and store.
- 1.4 The aim of the survey was to provide sufficient ecological information for the local planning authority (LPA) to determine the associated planning application. The objectives of the study were to:
- Provide baseline information on the current habitats and ecological features both on-site and in the immediate surrounding area;
 - Identify the presence or potential presence of any protected species or habitats and provide an appraisal of any potential effects that the proposed development may have on these;
 - Provide recommendations for further pre-construction survey work and / or mitigation measures if required and present opportunities for habitat enhancement.

2.0 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Bat Building Assessment

External and Internal Visual Assessment

- 2.1.1 The exterior of all aspects of the building were visually assessed for potential access points and evidence of bat activity on 6th January 2021. With the aid of binoculars, high powered torches and borescopes, features such as small gaps under barge/soffit/fascia boards, raised or missing roof/ridge tiles or gaps at gable ends, which have the potential for use as access points, were sought. Evidence that bats actively used these potential access points would include staining within the gaps, or bat droppings or urine staining under gaps; a note being made wherever these were present. 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. Following the external assessment, an internal assessment of the building was undertaken, searching for the same evidence.
- 2.1.2 The surveys was undertaken by Mick Smith MCIEEM (NRW bat licence number: S086034/1) and Jack Halpin (ACIEEM) of Wildbanks Conservation.
- 2.1.3 All buildings were classified as being one of either a confirmed roost or having high, moderate, low or negligible roosting potential for bats. Trees if present with low or negligible potential were classed as not requiring further surveys in relation to bats. Buildings with a rating of low or above would be subject to additional nocturnal surveys or for the development works to follow strict Reasonable Avoidance Measures in line with current national guidelines.
- 2.1.4 The surveys were undertaken following methodology set out in the Bat Conservation Trust Handbook Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016).
- 2.1.5 *Buildings-Birds-Visual Assessment*
The building was assessed for nesting birds within the same timeframe as the bat visual assessment of the building on 6th January 2021. All birds, their eggs and their nests are protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and therefore it is an offence to take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built. All cracks, gaps and potential nesting areas were checked for the presence of nests/nesting

material/live birds, and 10 minutes was spend listening for any noise of nestlings whilst inside the building.

Survey Limitations

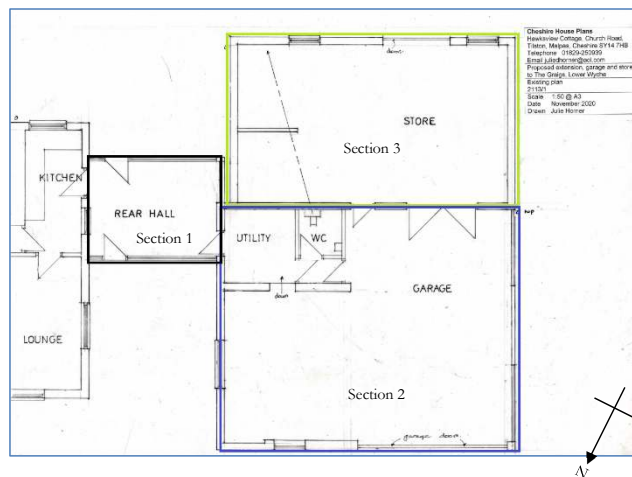
- 2.2 January is outside the optimal survey season to observe recent signs of bats and nesting birds. However, an assessment of a property's potential to be used by bats and birds can be made at any time of the year. Therefore, there were no limitations to the survey in terms of assessing the buildings potential to be used by bats. All areas of the buildings could be checked.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1.1 Buildings – Bat Visual Assessment

The garage block is single storey and consists of multiple rooms and extensions built over the years to create one building of a variety of construction techniques linked to the residential property via a wooden built room/walkway (Rear Hall/Section 1 on Fig 1. For the ease of identification, the garage block has been split into 3 in line with the different rooms and construction techniques. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Plan of current structure with separated sections



External assessment

3.1.2 Section 1

This is a rear porch attached to an occupied residential property and to both sections 2 and 3. The construction consists of knee-high brick wall with the rest of the wall consisting of wooden frame windows (Plates 1, 2). The roof structure is a mono-pitched corrugated metal sheet, providing limited opportunities for bats. The exterior of this building was predominately well-maintained and sealed. Bat roosting potential in the exterior of the structure was limited to a small gap between plywood fascia and the concrete roof on the north western aspect but this was partially obscured by a large shrub that would limit bat access.

3.1.3 *Section 2*

This is principally a single-story brick-built garage, the southern aspect consists of corrugated metal sheet wall. The external walls are double skin with no internal cavity, and with mortar being of good condition throughout, therefore providing limited roosting potential for bats. The roof structure is a low mono-pitch corrugated metal sheet construction, with metal fascia providing limited roosting potential for bats. Bat roosting potential in the exterior of the structure is limited to gaps behind fascia boards on the southern aspect of the building (plate 4), gaps between a wooden door header and the exterior wall, and a small section of broken brick work on north-western corner of the building (Plates 1, 4-6). All these features were at between 2 and 2.5m in height.

3.1.4 *Section 3*

This is a single-story brick-built building with a very shallow pitched corrugated asbestos roof. Externally, this building has limited potential for bats with brickwork and roof construction being in good condition. Potential bat roosting opportunities existed where gaps form between the bargeboard and wall, and gaps between wooden door header and brickwork; both features are on eastern gable aspect (Plates 2,7,8). These could visibly be checked and showed no signs of use by bats. One old bat dropping was found on the outside wall on the northern aspect of this section at 2m in height, not associated with any roost feature.

Internal assessment

3.1.5 *Section 1*

Internally, section 1 is an occupied part of the adjacent residential property. A roof void is present. However, no access points exist under the roof sheets or ridge or wall plate to allow bat access into this area. Internally this section is well maintained and sealed providing no opportunities for bats.

3.1.6 *Section 2 & 3- Garage block*

Access into these sections of the building were present from gaps between the corrugated roof sheeting and the brick wall plate. Internally, the structures had no roof void/loft, each building is open to the underside of the corrugated asbestos/metal sheets of the roof no underfelt or sarking is present. The timbers of the roof are visible, clean, and clear from detritus. Joins between brickwork and timber framing were tight, and no potential for bats. Possible bat roosting opportunities within the interior of these two buildings exist within the

brickwork. Some sections of the walls have bricks missing and provide cracks into a small void. (Plates 9-13).

- 3.1.7 Overall the garage block provides limited opportunities for bats, the roof construction of metal and asbestos sheets with no insulation or underfelt does not provide the stable thermal properties required by bats to use the main areas of the building. Some cracks and access to voids within the internal walls are present but it is considered unlikely that bats would use these areas as no free flight into the garage block exist. Bats would access the internal space by crawling through a crevice above the wall plate and then flying internally to these cracks/voids within internal walls. Which is considered unlikely. The main potential roosting features for bats are behind fascia boards on the southern and western aspects. These were checked thoroughly and were found to be heavily cobwebbed and showed no signs of bats. Additional access to roosting spaces were present onto the top of wall plate, which may be used by individual and opportunistic bats but would unlikely provide long term roosting features. These features were also at a maximum height of 2.5m which is possible but not optimal for bat usage.
- 3.1.8 No areas of the building provide suitable roosting opportunities for hibernating bats. The uninsulated steel and asbestos roof does not provide sufficiently stable thermal conditions within the garage to be used by bats. The brick walls also do not provide access to any voids where bats could potentially hibernate.
- 3.1.9 No evidence of roosting bats or presence of live bats was found within the structure. Some features within the building that could be used by crevice dwelling bat species are present. These features provided opportunities for individual bats and do not provide suitable conditions for regular use or for use by large numbers of bats (e.g., not suitable for maternity roosts or hibernation). Sections 1 and 2 are considered to have negligible potential for roosting bats. Section 3 is thought to provide low potential for roosting bats.
- 3.2 *Building – Birds*
No evidence of birds using the building for breeding purposes or any nesting material was found during the survey. No birds were seen entering or exiting the building during the survey.

4.0 DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY

4.1.1 This property has been subject to a bat Preliminary Roost Assessment survey and a visual assessment for nesting birds on 6th January 2021 by Mick Smith MCIEEM (NRW bat licence number: S086034/1) and Jack Halpin (ACIEEM) of Wildbanks Conservation.

4.1.2 No evidence of bats using the building was seen during the assessment and roosting opportunities were limited. Sections 1 and 2 are classified as having negligible bat roosting potential. A single bat dropping was found adhered to the wall underneath the guttering on the Eastern aspect. No roosting feature existed in the vicinity of the dropping and it is considered likely that this is from a flying bat foraging over the residential garden. However, some roosting opportunities for bats do exist in Section 3 of the garage block in the form of gaps behind fascia boards, and access on to the wall plate in places, as well as internal cracks in the brickwork. These features would not provide appropriate conditions for use on a regular basis or for large numbers of bats. The building is therefore classified as having negligible/low potential for bats.

Recommendations

4.1.3 Due to the negligible/low classification of the building to be used by bats it is recommended that no further survey effort is required and that the proposed development can proceed following a series of Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS), detailed below.

4.1.4 The below RAMS detailing protective measures and mitigation features should be agreed by Wrexham Council before any works to the building take place. The RAMS includes pre, during and post construction works.

4.1.5 Although the likelihood of bats using the building is negligible/low it cannot be ruled out completely, however risk to bats or roosts can be reduced further with the implementation and strict adherence to the RAMS.

4.1.6 The following RAMS have been designed to offset any impacts in both the short and long term for bats.

4.1.7 **Reasonable Avoidance Measures – Bats**

- A minimum of two months prior to any demolition works taking place two bat boxes will be installed on mature trees to the south east of the property at 3-4m in height and oriented -west through east. (see section 4.1.9-10 for details). These will provide alternative roosting opportunities similar to those present within the building during the construction phase.
- When planning external lighting, consideration is to be given to the commuting and dispersal routes used by bats. External lighting is to be directed away from the new roosting features incorporated into the scheme.
- Prior to the commencement of works a toolbox talk will be provided to on site personal by a NRW licensed ecologist. The talk will include information regarding the protection of species, habitats, legal implications, their responsibilities and what to do if a protected species are encountered. It will also detail what they will have to do during the construction phase with regards to bats and birds
- Demolition works should be planned for the period when bats are hibernating (when temperatures are consistently below 5C, as the property provides negligible opportunities for hibernating bats.).
- The initial works will be carried out under “soft works” technique to include removal of roof features (tin sheets/timbers) by hand. A licensed ecologist will provide a watching brief during the initial works and during works to areas where potential bat roost features are present and will be available throughout the construction phase on an ‘on call’ basis.
- If bats or birds, or any other animal are found during works, works must stop immediately, and the site ecologist will be contacted, and advice sought. Wildbanks Conservation 01978 710786

- 4.1.8 In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, Para 170(d) and Para 175(d)), to increase biodiversity at the proposed development site, it is recommended a mitigation/compensation scheme should be devised. This will include the installation of artificial roosts on suitable trees within the client’s land ownership and roosts built within the new development.

Ecological Enhancement details

- 4.1.9 It is recommended that new integral bat roosting features are included within the new development to maintain and improve the long-term opportunities for roosting bats on site. This is in line within recommendations within Planning

policies that developments should increase opportunities for biodiversity. The following should be incorporated into the new building.

- 1 x Istock Enclosed Bat Box C
- 1 x Habitat Bat Access Slate



4.1.10 In addition, as mentioned above, 2 months prior to demolition two bat boxes should be positioned in trees surrounding the property, Boxes placed within trees will be positioned above 3m in height in an East to West orientation with clear flight lines into them. The bat boxes will provide immediate roosting opportunities for bats, while the building is being demolished and the new building is being built. The differing orientations provide different microclimates that can be used by bats at different times of the year. The recommended bat boxes are one of each of the following 1FF Schwegler bat box and 2F Schwegler Bat Box (General Purpose) and are suitable to replace roosts for crevice dwelling species.

4.2 *Breeding birds*

No evidence of breeding birds was found within the property during the survey. However, January is outside the breeding bird season (March-August inclusive) and opportunities for nesting birds exist within the structure.

4.2.1 **Recommendations**

The disturbance and/or destruction of bird nests is prohibited under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended. If the development (including works to structures and vegetation/hedgerow removal) is to commence during the nesting bird season (March-August inclusive), there is potential for nesting birds to be disturbed and nests to be destroyed during the process.

4.2.2 To avoid impacts on nesting birds during this time, a nesting bird survey will be undertaken by a qualified ecologist before any works take place. If nests are

identified, the nests must remain intact and undisturbed until young have fledged.

- 4.2.3 The demolition of the buildings will result in long-term loss of nesting opportunities for bird species. Mitigation will be required to compensate for the loss of nesting habitat and to facilitate the development.



- 4.2.4 Two replacement nesting boxes (Such as 1SP Schwegler Sparrow Terrace and Schwegler 1B bird nesting box) will be installed within the client's land ownership, replacing nesting features for passerine birds present currently on Site. These will be positioned nearby vegetation between 2-4 in height and facing between north and east.



5.0 LEGISLATION

- 5.1 All bat species are protected in the UK under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The species is also protected under Annex II of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (the EC Habitats Directive). This has been transposed into UK law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) in England and Wales. Bats are referred to as European Protected Species (EPS).
- 5.2 It is an offence to deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat; intentionally or recklessly disturb in a way that would affect their local distribution or abundance, or affect their ability to survive, or breed. It is also an offence to damage or destroy a bat roost and to possess, advertise, control, transport, sell, exchange or offer for sale/exchange any live or dead bat or any part of a bat.
- 5.3 If work is proposed that would affect an EPS then a licence will be required. Natural England (NE), in exercise of the powers conferred under regulation 53(1) and 56(3) (a) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, may issue licences for the following purposes:
- Preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment;
 - Preventing the spread of disease;
 - Preventing serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber or any other form of property or to fisheries; to allow people to carry out activities which would otherwise be illegal.
- 5.4 Before issuing a licence under the Habitats Regulations, the licensing authority must be satisfied that “there is no satisfactory alternative” to the work as proposed and, that the proposed actions “will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status (FCS)”.
- 5.5 To ensure these requirements are met, the licensing authority must have enough information to complete an assessment of the application. This includes sufficient survey data so that the roost and how it is used by bats is understood and impacts upon the roost are appropriately assessed so that mitigation and/or

compensation can be designed into the proposed development that will ensure the bat population can be incorporated and maintained in the long term.

5.6 Seven bat species are UK BAP Priority Species. These are as follows:

- Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*
- Bechstein's *Myotis bechsteinii*
- Brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus*
- Greater horseshoe *Rhino ferrumequinum*
- Lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*
- Common noctule *Nyctalus noctula*
- Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*.

5.7 Under the NERC Act, local authorities (and other public bodies) have a duty to conserve biodiversity the local authority must take the protection of the priority habitat into consideration when it is making a planning decision.

6 REFERENCES

Collins, J (ed.). 2016. *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn)*. The Bat Conservation Trust. London.

Gov.uk. 2012. *National Planning Policy Framework - Publications - GOV.UK*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>> [Accessed 8 January 2021].

A1 APPENDIX – SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

A1.1 Plate 1: View of western aspect of building



A1.2 Plate 2: View of eastern aspect of building



A1.3 Plate 3: View of southern aspect of building.



A1.4 Plate 4: Example of gaps behind fascia boards on southern aspect of building



A1.5 Plate 5: Example of gap between door header and building



A1.6 Plate 6: Example of gap between fascia board



A1.7 Plate 7: Bargeboard on eastern aspect with view of door header



A1.8 Plate 8: Bargeboard on eastern gable aspect



A1.9 Plate 9: Interior of section 3 with gaps in brickwork



A1.10 Plate 10: Example of interior gaps between brickwork

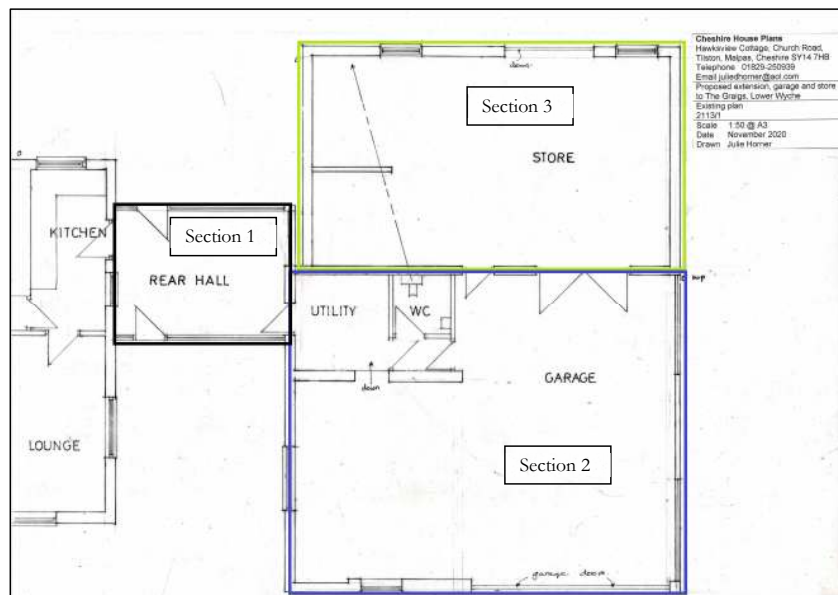


A1.11 Plate 11: Interior of section 2 of building



Figures

Figure 1: Plan of current structure showing separate sections



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Figure 2: Aerial image of the Site at 1:300



Figure 3: Aerial image of the Site at 1:3000

