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PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEY

STONE COTTAGE

CHURCH STREET, HOLT

WREXHAM

FOR

Mr & Mrs G Mitchell

8th September 2020

David Bennett BSc MSc MCIEEM

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1. INTRODUCTION

A preliminary protected species survey (bats and nesting birds) was undertaken on the 4th September 2020. The survey was carried out by David Bennett, a licensed and experienced bat surveyor and ecologist Natural Resource Wales & Natural England licenses - Natural Resource Wales & Natural England licenses - following a request by the current owners of the property. The survey was requested to satisfy planning requirements in respect of any protected species issues for Stone Cottage, Church Street, Holt, Wrexham, North Wales.

A planning consent is being sought to permit the removal of the rear brick extension to facilitate a new extension along with some other ancillary works.

2. BAT BIOLOGY

There are now 17 species of bat (breeding) in the UK, many of which can be found within this part of England. Each bat gives birth just once a year, early in summer, the females tending to gather together in a communal roost to give birth and bring up their young. This is the time when they are most likely to use buildings. By the end of the summer the roosts are often vacated for other more suitable hibernation sites such as caves, mines or trees. Hibernation sites are usually characterised by stable temperatures with a high level of humidity. When temperatures fall and food becomes scarce they hibernate and live off body fat stored during the autumn. During mild winters bats can still often be seen on an evening flying and looking for food. Bats use a variety of different structures for the purposes of roosting, these can include mature trees, caves, mines, buildings (old and new), bridges and tunnels.

Bats will generally cause no harm to buildings or the people that occupy the buildings. They can be very discreet and are often not noticed because of their preference to occupy tiny spaces, cracks and crevices in roof voids. Some species such as the brown long eared bat will utilise open loft areas for flying and moving around in. They will roost on bare exposed timber beams, typically beneath the ridge beam. The droppings produced are harmless (largely made up of insect fragments) and do not carry any disease although a very large roost can sometimes produce large quantities of droppings.

3. LEGISLATION

All of our species of domestic bat are protected under both UK and European legislation. In the UK they are listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994. The Habitats Directive has been superseded by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

To summarise it is illegal not only to intentionally kill, injure or take any bat but also too recklessly or intentionally damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection, or to disturb a bat while it is occupying such a place. A roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the time. The reason for this is that bats tend to remain loyal to certain roost sites, often over a long period of time.

The presence of a species protected under European or UK legislation is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal which, if carried out would be likely to result in disturbance or harm to the species or its habitat.

4. AIMS

The aims of the survey were:

1. To describe any evidence of protected species in the study area.
2. To assess the impact of carrying out the proposed works.
3. To suggest mitigation measures as appropriate.

5. STUDY AREA

The site consists of a small attached cottage with a two-storey, monopitch rear extension. It is located within an established residential area with a road frontage and street lighting.

The cottage has been constructed in a traditional manner with rendered stone/brick walls supporting a pitched and timber framed roof covered with clay tiles (front) and slate to the rear. The monopitch extension has been constructed from brick with an asbestos sheet roof.

The site plan is shown in Appendix 1 and the photos are shown in Appendix 2.

6. METHODOLOGY

The building was subjected to an internal and external survey on the 4th September 2020, the weather conditions were dry and clear. As much of the building as possible was searched (health and safety and access permitting) using a Cluson rechargeable lamp, a Seesnake endoscope (paying particular attention to the roof sections, ledges and any gaps or cavities). A search was made for bat droppings, staining, odour, old skeletons and feeding signs (such as wing casings etc). Other evidence such as bird's nests and other signs of nesting birds was also looked for both internally and externally.

7. RESULTS

No visible evidence of bats was found, no droppings were apparent, and no visible feeding remains or other evidence to suggest use by bats. The small attic space was inspected, no evidence of bats was found, the ridge areas are covered in cobwebs and each internal gable end is also covered in thick cobwebs and dust, the walls are also covered with dense cobwebs and dust.

Externally, the timber soffit area on the front elevation is intact with no holes, gaps or cavities. The timber soffit section at the side is also intact, it has slightly pulled away from the wall in one area and this space has been used by house sparrows.

The gable end of the cottage just below the slates/clay tiles has been sealed with mortar as shown in the photos below. The clay tiles to the front elevation and the slates to the rear are all intact and in position with no holes or large gaps.

The brick extension at the rear (due to be removed) has an asbestos panel roof, the small gaps within the curvature of the panel (end of the panel looking from the rear) have been accessed by house sparrows. Only the front section of the panel is accessible because there is a timber batten preventing any access further back into the roof area.

Overall, there does not appear to be any evidence of use by bats and nothing that would appear to cause any issues with the current proposals to remove the small brick extension and asbestos roof and also the reroof the main cottage.. The overall potential for the cottage to support roosting bats is negligible.

8. CONCLUSIONS, IMPACTS AND MITIGATION FOR BATS

No evidence suggesting bat use has been found during this survey and for the reasons suggested is thought unlikely and no further survey work is required. It therefore appears that there are no apparent issues relating to the proposed works in respect of bats at the present time. As outlined above it is often difficult to inspect every crevice or hidden section in a building (due to access or health and safety issues). In addition bats tend to be nomadic, which reduces the chances of finding bats on one or even several visits. This situation arises frequently when carrying out this type of survey. However, the survey has been completed to a good standard and it is not anticipated that any problems will occur. Carrying out the survey also puts in place demonstrable safeguards regarding the avoidance of illegal activities.

As a general note, most buildings offer potential for over-wintering and seasonal occupancy for individual bats. This use can be sporadic during the season and actual presence through emergence surveys cannot be fully confirmed. It is therefore recommended that the following precautionary recommendations should be undertaken as good working practice during the construction/demolition phase.

- **All roof tiles/slates/asbestos sheeting should be carefully removed by hand to ensure that no roosting, torpid or hibernating bats are injured during the proposed works.**
- **Door and window frames should be removed with care to ensure that no roosting, torpid or hibernating bats are injured during the proposed works.**
- **Structural members, lintel bearings, purlins or wall plates should be removed with care to ensure that no roosting, torpid or hibernating bats are injured during the proposed works.**
- **In the event that bats were found during the construction process then all work should cease and Natural England and/or a licensed bat worker should be contacted for further advice.**
- **Two soffit bat boxes will be installed on the rear west facing elevation of the new extension – available from Wildcare**

9. NESTING BIRDS

There was evidence of two house sparrow nests within the timber soffit area on the side of the rear brick extension. In addition, there is evidence of other nests (probably house sparrows) within the curvature of the asbestos panels on the rear elevation of the brick extension.

To provide suitable nesting space for house sparrows (to mitigate for the loss of existing space) four Schwegler 1SP house sparrow nest boxes will be installed on the rear elevation of the new extension.

All breeding birds are protected under Section 1(1) and 1(2) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. This makes it an offence to damage, disturb, or obstruct access to nests during the bird breeding season (generally March to September).

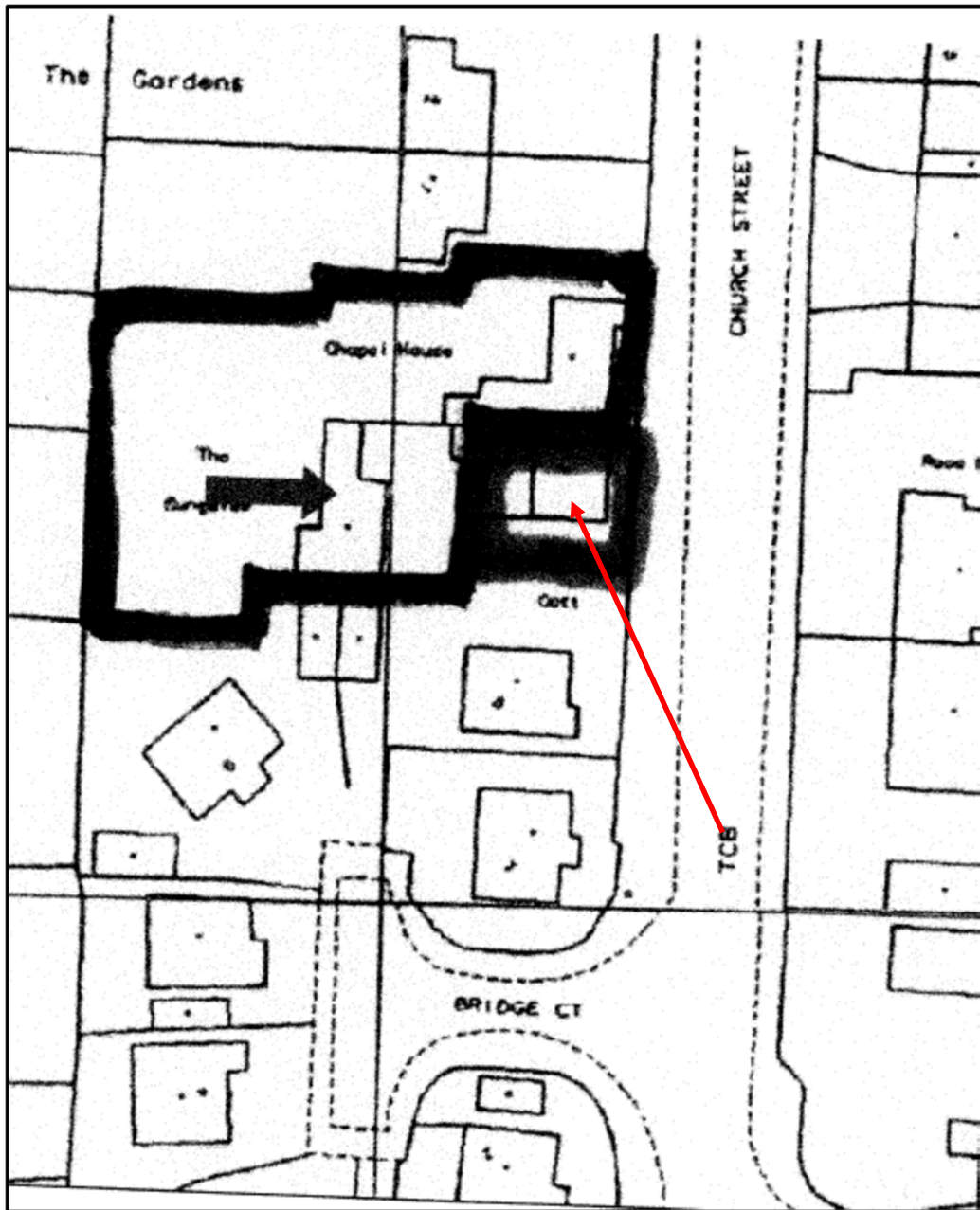
10. REFERENCES

BCT 2016 Good Practice Guidelines 2nd Edition 2016 BCT

Joint Nature Conservation Committee 2004 *Bat Workers Manual* JNCC Peterborough

Mitchell-Jones A J 2004 *Bat Mitigation Guidelines* English Nature Peterborough UK

Appendix 1 – Site location plan



Appendix 2 – Site Photos

Front elevation



Side elevation



Rear elevation – small brick extension to be removed



Sealed timber soffits at the front



Gable end has been filled in with mortar



Sealed timber section on the gable end



Asbestos roof on the rear extension – house sparrows have nested within the curved sections of the panelling



Timber fascia board at the rear is tight to the wall



This timber section has a slight gap with two house sparrow nests



Gap between cottage and rear extension where the wall has pulled away, but this is only 4-5 inches deep and all areas can be seen



Chimney is all intact and sealed



Mortar in the gable end



Front elevation



Cobwebbed roof void



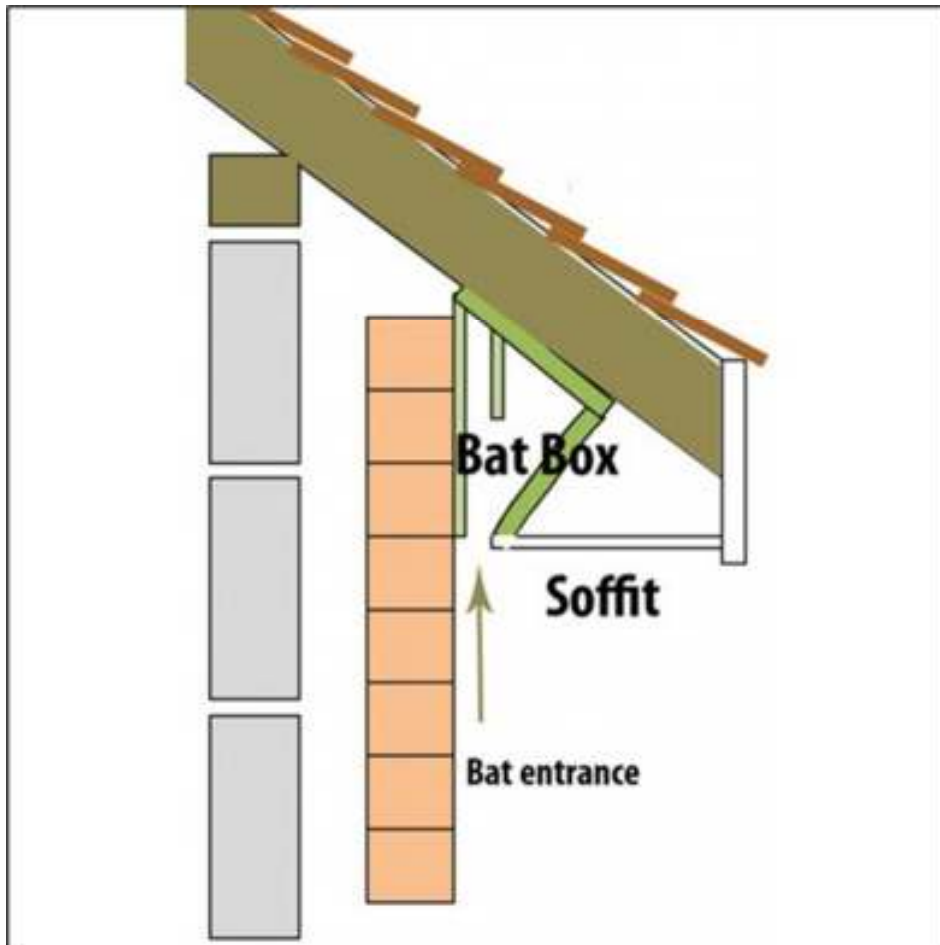
Cobwebbed ridge areas



Dense cobwebs around each internal gable end



Appendix 3 – mitigation examples



Soffit bat box available from Wildcare



Schwegler 1SP sparrow nest box

