

Mrs Hughes

Home Farmhouse, Wrexham Road, Holt

Bat Survey

June 2019

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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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of Mrs Julie Hughes and provides the results of a Bat Survey undertaken at Home Farmhouse, Wrexham Road, Holt on 30th May 2019. The property in question comprises a small two-storey outbuilding with a single storey flat roof building adjoining the outbuilding to the east. A neighbour's garage abuts the building to the west. Hardstanding surrounds the building to the south, along with the client's residential property.
- 1.2 The proposed development site is located in a rural setting in the small village of Holt, Wrexham. The property is surrounded by residential properties on all sides. In the wider landscape, agricultural fields are located to the west, north and east, and the River Dee is located approx. 300m to the south east.
- 1.3 Development proposals for the site are for the demolition of the existing building due to the brick wall on the west side subsiding, therefore deeming it as structurally unsafe. The building is to be replaced on its existing footprint with a building with a similar footprint and design to the existing building. Due to the presence of some features suitable for roosting bat species, a preliminary roost assessment was conducted and dusk survey is required to assess the livelihood of bats being present. Additionally, a survey for nesting birds was undertaken within the same time period for any constraints regarding these.

2.0 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Desk Top Study

2.1.1 The desktop study involved data searches for statutory and non-statutory sites and protected species records within a 500m radius of the site. The centre of the site (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference SJ 4074 5360) was used for the data search.

2.1.2 The following sources were searched for information about the Site:

- COFNOD data request of protected species within 500m.
- Google Earth;
- Bing Maps;
- Publicly accessible records.

Bat Building Assessment

External and Internal Visual Assessment

2.2.1 The exterior of all aspects of the building were visually assessed for potential access points and evidence of bat activity on 30th May 2019. With the aid of binoculars, 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. All areas inside the building were accessed and could visually be assessed.

Bat Emergence Survey

2.2.2 Following the external and internal visual assessment, an emergence survey was undertaken on the building to observe any potential bats roosting in the building not identified during the visual assessment. The survey was carried out by two surveyors experienced in bat surveys; Emma Hankinson (NE bat licence no: 2015- 11170-CLS-CLS) and Jack Halpin. The surveyors were positioned strategically so that good coverage of all aspects of the building was achieved. The survey was undertaken within the optimum time for bat activity (May-

September) and under optimum conditions; clear, sunny and dry, with an ambient air temperature of 16°C and no rain. Sunset time was at 21:25h. The survey commenced at 21:10h (15 minutes prior to sunset) and continued until 23:25h. This time frame allowed the surveyors to cover all potential species of bats they may be using the property. Surveys were undertaken using an Echo Meter Touch Pro Bat detector, connected to an iPad for recording of any bat calls. Any recordings were analysed using batsound and or Kaleidoscope software.

2.2.3 *Buildings-Birds-Visual Assessment*

The building was assessed for nesting birds within the same timeframe as the bat visual assessment of the building on 30th May 2019. 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. The exterior of the building was watched for approximately 1 hour to locate any birds entering or exiting the building.

- 2.2.4 The surveys were undertaken following methodology set out in the Bat Conservation Trust Handbook Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016).

Survey Limitations

- 2.3 May is within the optimal survey season to see recent signs of bat usage. Therefore, there were no limitations to the survey in terms of assessing the buildings potential to be used by bats. All areas (both exterior and interior) of the buildings could be accessed to allow a thorough visual inspection to be undertaken.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 As discussed above, a number of online resources were reviewed as part of the desk top study. A data request was also submitted to COFNOD. There are no sites of statutory importance located within the 500m search area of the site. Only one record of a single bat species was recorded ~200m to the southwest of the site in 1989. This was not a roost.

3.2.1 *Buildings – Bat Visual Assessment*

The building itself is a small (size of a garage) old two storey brick-built barn building with a pitched slate roof (Plates 1-6). The upper and lower floors are separated by a wooden floor with wooden stairs leading to the upper section. The roof void was exposed with no separate loft space, with exposed wooden beams present. Beams were clean, with no cobwebs or detritus. There was no insulation or underfelt present on the roof itself exposing the underside of the roof slates. On the southern aspect of the building, a wooden slatted, disused entrance door was present. A single storey, flat roofed brick building was present attached to the west side of the building (plate 2).

3.2.2 Some gaps suitable for bats did exist within the building. These included gaps between wooden slats of the first floor door allowing access in to the outbuilding, small gaps under wooden facias on the north gable end, and gaps from occasional slipped, missing and broken tiles on both sides of the pitched roof. The space behind the fascia boards was checked using torches and binoculars and gaps present did appear to predominantly be shallow and covered in cobwebs. The gaps within the slates did not provide roosting opportunities for bats that could not be visually assessed because the underside of the slates could be checked as no roof membrane was present and no bats or evidence of bats using the internal roof structure was seen. The brick walls were single skin and had no insulation therefore did not provide any potential for roosting bats.

3.2.3 The outbuilding was classed as having low potential for bats and as such a single emergence survey was conducted to ascertain presence or likely absence of bats.

3.2.4 The single storey flat roofed garage building connected to the two storey building had no features that could be used by bats and no evidence of usage by bats or actual presence of bats were found during the external and internal inspection.

3.2.5 *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.

3.2.6 *Bat Emergence Survey*

A single bat emergence survey was undertaken on 30th May 2019. A single bat activity survey was undertaken due the building being classified as low potential for bats, this is in line with best practise guidelines published by Bat Conservation Trust. Very little bat activity was observed during the survey. A single noctule bat (*Nyctalus noctule*) passed from north to south at 22:00h, a single soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) passed from east to west at approximately 22:15h and two common pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) were observed passing the front of the building at 22:29h. No bats were seen emerging from the building during the survey.

3.2.7 *Surrounding Habitat*

The land up to approx. 500m surrounding the site consists mainly of residential dwellings, with agricultural fields in the larger area to the north, east, south and west of the site and the River Dee located approx. 300m to the east of the property. Foraging and commuting opportunities exist along the River Dee, and hedgerow and tree lines within the area surrounding the river. In general, the site is relatively isolated in terms of its connectivity to good foraging habitat for bats.

4.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 This property has been subject to a bat scoping survey; including a visual assessment and a single bat emergence survey on 30th May 2019 carried out by Emma Hankinson (NE bat licence number: 2015-11170-CLS-CLS) and Jack Halpin, Wildbanks Conservation. The building was classified as having low potential for bats, therefore a single emergence survey is sufficient survey effort to establish presence or likely absence of bats
- 4.2 No evidence of bats using the buildings were recorded during the survey. Although some roosting opportunities for bats do exist in the form of access through the wooden slatted entrance door and gaps under fascia boards (Plates 1-6), no evidence these were used by bats was observed.
- 4.3 As such it is recommended the development can commence without any additional survey effort with regards to bats. However, it should be noted that bats are transitory by nature and use multiple roosts throughout the year. If demolition of the building has not been carried out by March 2020 or if the building deteriorates within this time, the survey should be repeated.
- 4.4 Although there are limited features within the buildings that could be utilised by bats, it is recommended that new integral bat roosting features are included within the new development to improve the potential of the building for bats. This is in line with recommendations within Planning policies that developments should increase opportunities for biodiversity. One of either of the following should be incorporated into the new building.

- Schweglar 1FR bat tube
- Istock Enclosed Bat Box C
- Habitat Bat Access Slate

Bat boxes should be positioned above 3m in height in an East to West orientation with clear flight lines in to them. Boxes facing different orientations provide different microclimates that can be used by bats at different times of the year and this practise could be implemented.

Breeding birds

- 4.5 No evidence of breeding birds was found within the property during the survey. May is within the breeding bird season (March – September) there are no

constraints on development regarding breeding birds. However, if the building is not removed before March 2020, it is recommended a nesting bird check is undertaken prior to demolition to establish if birds are using the building at that point.

5.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

5.1 A bat visual assessment and emergence survey was undertaken at the proposed development site in May 2019. The building was classified as having low potential for bats. A single bat emergence survey was undertaken on 30th May 2019. No evidence of bats using the property was observed.

5.2 No statutory constraints to the development have been noted on site with respect to the potential presence of bat species. As such the development can proceed without further effort with regards to bats.

5.3 Although there are no features within the buildings that could be utilised by bats, it is recommended that new bat roosts are positioned within the site to improve bat roosting opportunities within the local area. One of either of the following should be incorporated into the new building.

- Schweglar 1FR bat tube
- Ibstock Enclosed Bat Box C
- Habibat Bat Access Slate

6.0 LEGISLATION

- 6.1 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).
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 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)”.
- 6.5 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.

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

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

6.7 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.

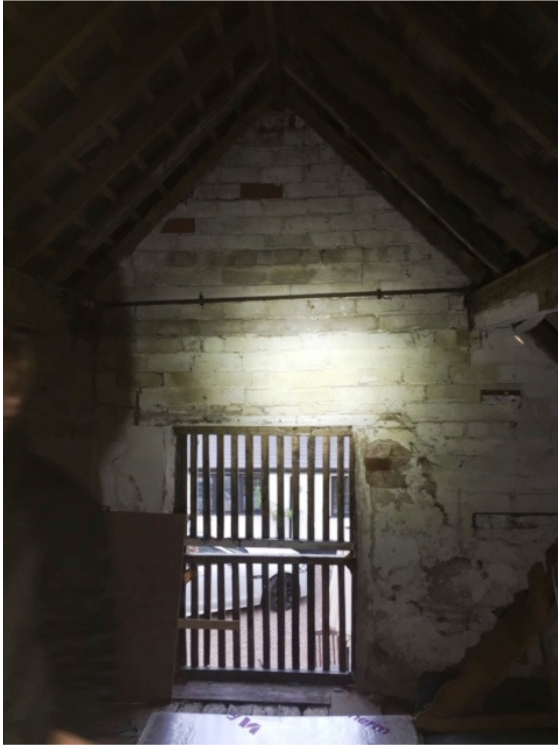
A1 APPENDIX – SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



A1.1 Plate 1: View of the Southern Aspect of the building



A1.2. Plate 2: View of the western side of building with adjoining single storey garage



A1.3: Plate 3: Interior view of Southern aspect of building



A1.4: Plate 4: Interior view of Northern aspect of building



A1.5: Plate 5: Interior view of roof showing exposed wooden beams.



A1.6: Plate 6: Interior view of adjoining single storey garage of building.

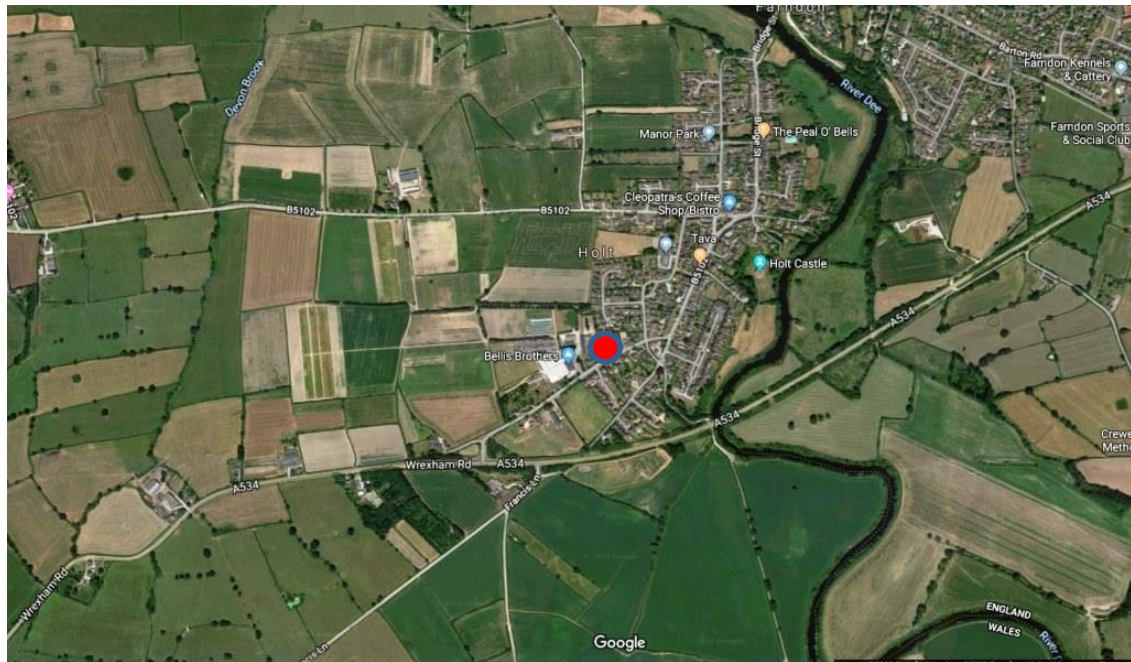


Figure 1: Aerial photograph of development site (Google imagery 2019)