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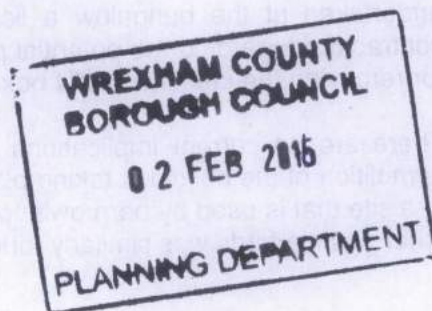
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The Bungalow, Valley Road, Ffrith, Wrexham, LL11 5LP
(Grid Ref: SJ 2831 5517)

Inspection & Assessment in Relation to Bats & Breeding Birds

Prepared for:

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Summary

It is proposed to demolish a bungalow and two outbuildings at Valley Road, Ffrith followed by the construction of new residential dwellings at the site. As part of the planning application process the site owner commissioned the Tyrer Partnership (Ecological Consultants) to undertake an initial daytime survey to ascertain its value in relation to bat roost potential/nesting birds and if evidence of use was present.

The survey was conducted on 26th January 2016 when the buildings that will be demolished were inspected for potential places that may be of value to bats and if evidence of use was present. The building features a loft space which was inspected with the use of high powered torch for the presence of bats or evidence of use such as droppings or prey remains. The exterior elevations were investigated from ground floor level with the aid of close focussing binoculars for places that are frequently used by bats as roosts or as access into roost chambers.

The daytime survey was conducted by Mrs K Wilding a highly experienced surveyor, who holds a current Natural England Class 2 bat licence (CLS02804), but more relevant to the site/location is an accredited agent on a NRW bat license (51880:OTH:CSAB:2014), for which Mr S Irwin is the licensee. During the internal and external inspection no evidence of recent or historic bat use was located. The localised habitat will provide valuable foraging and commuting opportunities for several bat species.

Breeding opportunities for loft dwelling species are absent within the structures despite the extending habitat offering potential for this species specific foraging requirements, therefore the demolition the buildings will not have any impact on this species.

Evidence of use by crevice dwelling species was not observed, and typical places favoured by this species are largely devoid both internally and externally, however, due to the extremely limited potential, taking into consideration the local landscape and how mobile / transient bats are, It is recommended that prior to any work being undertaken at the bungalow a licensed bat ecologist should attend site to brief contractors regarding the potential presence of bats and the methodology to be used for removing the identified soffit box.

There are no current implications in relation to barn owls that would prevent the demolition of the buildings taking place and the proposals would not result in the loss of a site that is used by barn owls for breeding or roosting purposes. The presence of other nesting birds was similarly found to be absent.



Table of Contents

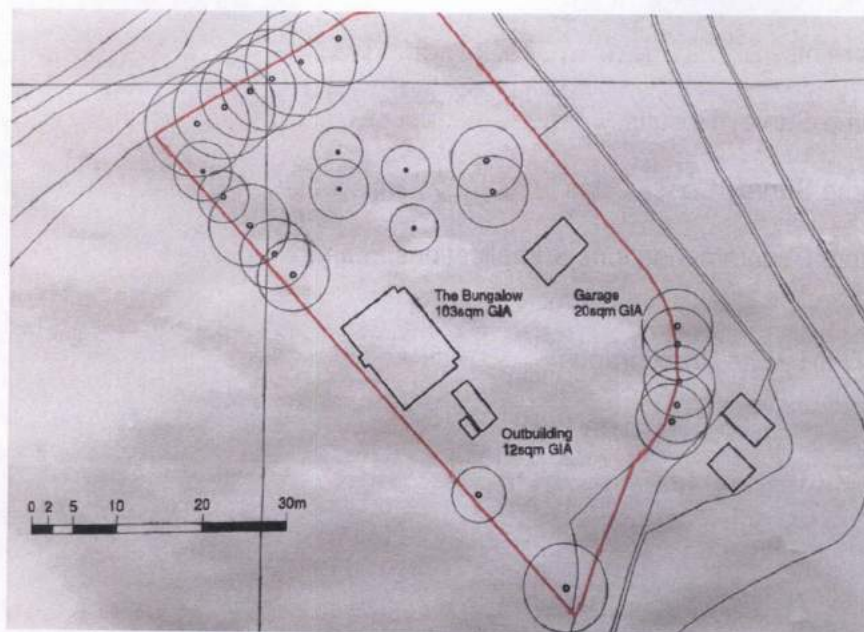
1. Introduction and Reasons for Survey.....	
2. Protected Species & Their Requirements.....	
3. Protected species in North Wales.....	
4. Survey Methodology	
5. Constraints	
6. Daytime Survey Results.....	
7. Daytime Survey Conclusions	
8. Daytime Recommendations & Implications.....	

APPENDIX I - Site Photographs

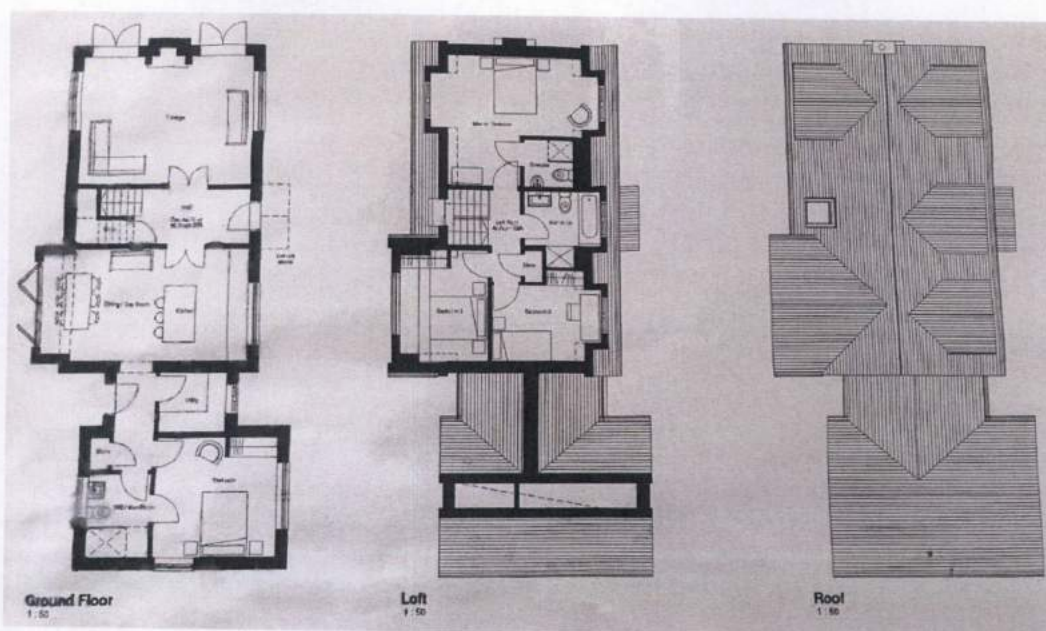


1.0 Introduction & Reason for Survey

- 1.1 As part of a proposed development at The Bungalow, Wrexham, an inspection and assessment was undertaken in relation to bats and breeding birds. The site owner commissioned the inspection and report and it is understood that the proposals involve the demolition of the exiting property followed by the construction of a new residential dwelling. 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.



Existing site plan of The Bungalow proposed for demolition



Proposed layout of new dwelling



- 1.2 The aim of the inspection was to initially ascertain if the building is of value to bats or breeding birds; if it was found to be suitable for bats, signs of use were located or the survey was inconclusive then more detailed surveys would be recommended i.e. dusk/dawn emergence/re-entry surveys during the main active season of bats which is May – August. If bat/s or their roost/place of rest/shelter is subsequently affected by the work then a Welsh Assembly Development Licence would be required to proceed with the development.
- 1.3 The optimum time to investigate any structure 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. It should be borne in mind that equally the inspection can be inconclusive.

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 (as amended). 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 *Planning Policy Wales* (PPW) (2002) sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government (WG). It is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs). Procedural advice is given in National Assembly for Wales / Welsh Office circulars. PPW, Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statements (MIPPS), the TANs and circulars together comprise national planning policy to which local planning authorities in Wales must have regard in the preparation of development plans.
- 2.3 Detailed advice on the preparation of unitary development plans (UDPs) is contained in *Unitary Development Plans Wales*, 2001. Detailed advice on the preparation of Local Development Plans (LDPs) under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 is given in *Local Development Plans Wales*, 2005.
- 2.4 Technical Advice Note (TAN 5 2009) provides advice about how the land use planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation. This guidance note should be read in conjunction with *Planning Policy Wales* (2002), in particular with Chapter 5 *Conserving and Improving the Natural Heritage and Coast* which sets out the Assembly Governments objectives for the natural heritage and the land use planning policies which support these.

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles:-

If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.



2.5 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*" 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.

- 2.6 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. barn owls are afforded a greater level of protection. Where nesting birds are present then work should be timed outside of the nesting season (March – August) so as to avoid disturbance.

3.0 Bat Species in North Wales

- 3.1 Up to eleven bat species have been recorded in North Wales 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 North Wales is reflected throughout the UK.
- 3.2 Barn owls are regularly recorded within North Wales where an agricultural matrix that includes suitable bank sides of drainage ditches or rough pasture that will provide habitat for their main prey i.e. small mammals; however they are constantly under threat from loss of habitat and nest sites, which is a situation that is mirrored throughout most of the UK.

4.0 Survey Methodology

- 4.1 The daytime survey was conducted on 26th January 2016 when the building included within the planning application was inspected for potential places that may be of value to bats and if evidence of use was present. The building features a loft space which was inspected with the use of high powered torch for the presence of bats or evidence of use such as droppings or prey remains. The exterior elevations were investigated from ground floor level with the aid of close focussing binoculars for places that are frequently used by bats as roosts or as access into roost chambers.
- 4.2 The daytime survey was conducted by Mrs K Wilding a highly experienced surveyor, who holds a current Natural England Class 2 bat licence (CLS02804), but more relevant to the site/location is an accredited agent on a NRW bat license (51880:OTH:CSAB:2014), for which Mr S Irwin is the licensee.



- 4.3 The inspection for nesting birds, notably barn owls, was conducted in tandem with the investigation for bats; external elevations and the interior of the buildings were inspected for signs of use which would include pellets, discarded feathers or typical splashes of white faeces on or around roosting places.

- 4.4 The results, conclusions and recommendations are based on a number of factors i.e.

Practical experience of surveyor
Knowledge of species relevant to the site location and geographical distribution
Nature of the immediate and surrounding habitat in relation to foraging opportunities
Condition of the buildings
Presence/absence of a loft space
Presence/absence of roost/nesting potential
Value of roost/nesting potential – if present

- 4.5 During the survey the surrounding habitat was evaluated in relation to bats/barn owls as very often roost/nest selection is closely correlated with the surrounding habitat.

5.0 Constraints

- 5.1 The daytime survey was conducted outside of the breeding season, when bats are within their hibernation season. The exterior elevations were investigated from ground floor level, with the aid of close focussing binoculars, for places that are frequently used by bats as roosts or as access into roost chambers.

- 5.2 Taking the above into consideration it is established that there were no survey constraints that would prevent the gathering of information on which to base conclusions and recommendations.

6.0 Daytime Results - Bats

- 6.1 The bungalow for which the survey was undertaken is located within a semi rural environment on the outskirts of Ffrith Village, a small urban settlement approximately 7.40 kilometres north west of Wrexham town centre. The building is accessed beneath Ffrith viaduct along a private access land and sits nestled within its own extensive and established grounds consisting of a number of ornamental trees/shrubs/plants.

- 6.2 To all aspects of the site the immediate habitat interconnects with the extending landscape which is considered as being highly favourable for bat species known to be present within the vicinity. Established and mature woodland is observed to all aspects notably within Naty Y Ffrith which incorporates Nant, Black and Darnau Woods immediately south west. These valuable sites further connect to extensive woodland at LLandegla Forest and several water bodies notably Naty Y Ffrith and Pendina Reservoirs. Furthermore, the River Cegidog is located 0.40 kilometres east running through a vast expanse of mature woodland.



Location of The Bungalow within the immediate & surrounding habitat

- 6.3 The aforementioned landscape is considered as being favourable for the species for which the survey was undertaken, i.e. bats and breeding birds. Where such habitat is present close to buildings then the percentage use of those buildings, by bats increases given that roost opportunities are available and vice versa.
- 6.4 The open pasture and agricultural land within the wider landscape provides a high level of favourable hunting grounds for barn owls, and where this landscape is present close to buildings the percentage use of those buildings, by barn owls increases given that roost/nesting opportunities are available and vice versa.
- 6.5 The surveyed dwelling consists of a detached bungalow constructed with T & G timber cladding and a tin profile pitched roof; the building occupies an elevated position overlooking an established garden and has stood in situ for over 100 years, it is currently occupied by the present owner who has inhabited the dwelling spanning several decades. Notwithstanding this, as a consequence of its age and construction the bungalow would require extensive remedial and modernisation work to make the building suitable for modern day habitable purposes and in line with today's energy efficient standards.
- 6.6 Internally, the structure contains a loft space the extent of which is to approximate dimensions of 13 metres long x 7 metres wide x 0.5 metres high; on the day of the survey the loft is cold, heavily cobwebbed with no signs of recent disturbance that would suggest free hanging bats, furthermore, a number of rat droppings are observed throughout the area. Due to the aforementioned reasons the building would not suit the requirements of loft dwelling bats such as Brown Long Eared (*Plecotus auritus*) as this is a species that favours a large, darkened and unrestricted loft space that allows free flight, with consistent warm and relatively stable temperatures.

Despite the immediate and extending habitat being considered to offer potential to meet the specific foraging requirements of this species, no recent or historic evidence of use is located during the inspection.



- 6.7 During the inspection sarking boards are present beneath the tin roof, which increases potential for crevice dwelling bats, typically Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus*) as this is a species that is often found roosting between roofing materials subject to external access being available. Despite the habitat meeting the needs of this species which are often associated with such environments, and are the most urban dwelling UK bat species, during the inspection, no evidence to suggest recent or historic use by these species was observed.

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 structures are also used, especially for hibernation or by male bats which do not need the same conditions as a maternity colony.

- 6.8 During the exterior inspection typical places often favoured by crevice dwelling bats such as roof / ridge tiles, fascia/barge boards are found to be absent and sections of felt hanging tiles are found to be sealed to the structure with bitumen / nails which therefore results in an absence of ingress potential. Minor gaps are noted to the south east aspect of the building whereby a small gap is present between the felt hanging tiles and the soffit box; however, the area appears to be limited and restrictive in nature.
- 6.9 Two outbuildings are present on site, both of which are currently used for storage and the housing of poultry; they are single storey, timber construction with bitumen felt roof coverings. On the day of the survey both are found to be devoid of bat roost potential for either loft or crevice dwelling bat species.

Daytime Results - Birds

- 6.10 Although the surrounding habitat is suitable for barn owls no recent or historic signs of use were observed in relation to breeding/roosting and the building are less than ideal as there are no cavities or secluded places to nest. Signs of other nesting birds that rely upon built structures, e.g. Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*), House martin (*Delichon Urbica*) or Swift (*Apus apus*) was, on the day of the survey, absent.

7.0 Daytime Conclusions

- 7.1 Breeding opportunities for loft dwelling species are absent throughout all of the structures on site and no evidence is found to suggest their presence. Due to the absence of opportunities for this species and the unsuitability of the buildings it is considered the demolition will not impact upon loft dwelling bats.
- 7.2 As identified within the survey results no physical evidence has been identified which would suggest the presence of crevice dwelling bats. Furthermore, the interior and the exterior of the building is largely devoid of potential roost opportunities and it can be conclusively established the status of the building is categorised as being of less than low roost potential. In the context of roost potential and the proposed works it is highly unlikely the demolition will impact upon crevice dwelling bat species therefore dusk emergence surveys will not be recommended. However, considering the valuable immediate and extending habitat it is recommended that the identified soffit removal to the south east elevation is as precautionary measure conducted under the supervision of a bat licensed ecologist.



- 7.3 There are no current implications in relation to barn owls that would prevent the demolition of the buildings taking place and the proposals would not result in the loss of a site that is used by barn owls for breeding or roosting purposes.

8.0 Daytime Recommendations & Implications

- 8.1 It is recommended that prior to any work being undertaken at the bungalow a licensed bat ecologist should attend site to brief contractors regarding the potential presence of bats and the methodology to be used for removing the identified soffit box. The contractor will provide a safe means of access for the ecologist who will use an endoscope and torchlight to investigate the areas noted in the survey results along with any other areas that become apparent and could be used by bats; should no bats or evidence of use be located the soffit removal can commence under the direct supervision of the ecologist. Should bat/s or evidence of use be located during the stripping or any other works the bat/s and the location it/they are/were using must be left in situ with access and shelter retained. Work must then cease until such a time further survey works in the form of dusk emergence surveys have been completed during the months of May- August.

- 8.2 It should be noted that where bat/s or their roost/place of rest/shelter will be affected by the proposed works, then to allow work at the site to legally commence, an application for European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) will be required. Notwithstanding the granting of a licence works that would affect a roost cannot take place if a maternity colony is in occupation. It should also be noted that before an EPSML can be applied for all Planning issues including Consent and any pre-commencement Planning Conditions relative to bats should be resolved.

- 8.3 Natural England provides information and guidance about EPSML and the following extract is included in that guidance:-

- A licence is needed if the consultant ecologist, on the basis of survey information and specialist knowledge of the species concerned, considers that on balance the proposed activity is reasonably likely to result in an offence under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)
- If the consultant ecologist, on the basis of survey information and specialist knowledge of the species concerned, considers that on balance the proposed activity is reasonably unlikely to result in an offence being committed then no licence is required. However, in these circumstances Natural England would urge that reasonable precautions be taken to minimise the effect on European protected species should they be found during the course of the activity. If European protected species are found, cease the work until you have assessed whether you can proceed without committing an offence.
- A licence should be applied for if offences are unavoidable and the work should not be re-started until a licence is obtained.
- The application should be completed by the developer and a consultant ecologist. The ecologist will need to be able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of Natural England that they have the relevant skills and knowledge of the species concerned.



**APPENDIX I –
Site Photographs**



The Bungalow proposed for demolition



Minor & limited gaps between the soffit and felt tiles