

Outbuildings, Overton View

Protected Species Assessment

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Contents

Summary	3
Introduction	3
Site Description	3
Legal Position	3
Desktop Survey	3
Possible Threats	4
Results & Interpretation	5-6
Reasonable Avoidance Measures	6

Appendices

Site Photographs
Location Plan

Summary

- A site visit to assess for Bats and Birds was carried out on 24th September 2017.
- Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) have been prepared for bats and swallows.
- The development will not have an impact on the above protected species if the RAM's are followed.

1 Introduction

The outbuildings are adjacent to Overton View on Cloy Lane Grid Reference SJ 397 419. An application is to be made to Wrexham County Borough Council for the sympathetic conversion of a section of the outbuildings to residential accommodation.

Site description

Overton View is a smallholding surrounded by farmland. There is an excellent local network of hedgerows, mature trees and ponds. It is within an area of bat activity with records of bats within the local area. Swallows are present locally and use the outbuildings for nesting.

2 Legal Position

Bats

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) gives full protection to bats. It is also illegal to intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat or damage/destroy a place a bat uses for shelter or rest (Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. Bats are also protected under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 as well as the Bern and Bonn Conventions.

Birds

All species of wild bird, their nests and eggs are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and, amongst other things, it is an offence to, with certain exceptions, intentionally or recklessly:

- Kill, injure or take any wild bird
- Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.
- Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

3 Desktop Survey

The 1:25:000 Ordnance survey sheet for the area and Google Earth were scrutinised to assess surrounding habitat.

Protected Species: The site is within an area of great crested newt and bat activity and both are assumed present in wider area.

Protected Sites: Cloy Brook Pastures Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – unimproved calcareous clay pastures with botanical interest lies 560 metres north west of the site.

Site Survey

An assessment survey was carried out on 24th September for protected species presence and habitat. All the buildings were assessed from the inside and outside

4 Possible Threats

Bats

Most bats have a number of roosts and hibernate in a cool / humid roost during the winter months, before moving to a warm roost for the breeding season. Bats are most likely to use buildings to roost in summer. Maternity roosts in old buildings are often found in spaces between roofing felt and plasterboard under sloping south-facing roofs, accessed from gable apex or under eaves. Bats are especially vulnerable during hibernation (October to March), late pregnancy and whilst dependent young, unable to fly, are in roosts (May to September).

Roost selection is linked to suitable foraging habitat within a reasonable commuting distance from the roost.

Birds

Swallows and barn owls are most likely to be affected by the conversion of outbuildings and agricultural structures as both species use spaces within buildings.

Swallows are present in Britain between April and October, overwintering in Africa. Swallows return to their nest sites and raise 2 – 3 broods annually. Single nests are common but swallows often breed in small colonies of 4 or 5 pairs. Swallows are an RSPB 'amber list' species due to heavy falls in population.

5 Results & Interpretation

Swallows and birds

Barn owls are not present in the buildings.

Swallows are present and nest annually in part of the main elevation used to store hay and the adjoining tack room. The applicant is sympathetic to swallows and deliberately keeps the doors to the stables and hay storage

room open during nesting time. Five nests were noted and there are lots of droppings within the buildings. Swallows also nest in all three of the stables to remain. These stables offer excellent nesting opportunities that will be not be disturbed and the new stable to be built is an additional nesting place.

To avoid disturbing nesting birds during the conversion access must be sealed off to the swallows before they arrive. This can easily be achieved by ensuring all doors and windows remain closed. The doors to the stables unaffected will be kept open to provide swallow nesting space.

Bats

There are records of bats in the surrounding area. The rural farmland habitat is suitable foraging for bats and some of the farmhouses, mature trees and woodland nearby are suitable roosts.

The barns to be converted show no evidence of use by bats and do not provide typical roosting opportunities for bats. There are no roosting opportunities behind the gable apex, bargeboards or fascia boards due to their new and good condition. The roof slates are in immaculate condition and inside the buildings are open to the roof with no roofing felt. There is no darkened staining outside or inside, no droppings and no insect feeding remains in the abundant cobwebs

Bat roosting habitat is not at risk through the development. As the surrounding farmland around the site is suitable foraging for bats it is recommended that bat access is incorporated into the roof/ridge slates of the new stable and that two bat boxes are fitted externally to nearby mature trees. For further information see <http://www.bats.org.uk>

6 Reasonable Avoidance Measures

Swallows

- All entrances must be sealed off to swallows before 31st March 2018 to avoid use of the buildings for nesting and thus disturbance.
- Doors to the remaining stables should be kept open (as they are presently) to allow nesting in these stables.

Bats

- **Vigilance:** If a bat is discovered or suspected during building development all work should cease for consultation with Local Authority and Countryside Council for Wales and the situation assessed by a licensed consultant before work can proceed.
- The applicant is happy to encourage bats and will incorporate bat access into the new roof/ridge slates of the stable and provide two bat boxes on mature trees on the small holding.

Appendix 1: Photographs

 A photograph showing the main elevation of a barn. The building has a light-colored upper section and a brick lower section. A large open bay door on the left reveals yellow storage boxes inside. A green tractor with a hay trailer is parked in front of the barn. A broom and a shovel are on the ground near the tractor.	Plate 1: Main elevation to be converted. Swallows presently use the open storage section on the left for nesting. The building is in a very weatherproof, intact condition; there are no crevices or openings around the barge boards, fascia boards and eaves which bats may use for roosting.
 A photograph showing the side elevation of the barn. It features several bays with open doors. A green hose is coiled on the ground in front of the building. The brickwork is visible at the base of the walls.	Plate 2: Barns to be retained and not subject to conversion. Swallow nests are present in all three stables. Retaining these barns as open and in their current use will ensure continued nesting opportunities for swallows.
 A photograph showing a close-up of the roofline and eaves of the barn. The roof is dark, and the eaves are visible. A downspout is attached to the side of the building.	Plate 3: There is no evidence of use by bats noted within or outside the buildings.
 A photograph showing a close-up of the fascia and bargeboards of the barn. The boards appear intact and sealed, with no visible cracks or crevices.	Plate 4: The intact fascia boards and bargeboards do not provide cracks or crevices for bats. They are completely sealed.



Plate 5: The roof space inside the main elevation is open and easily assessed for suitability by bats. It is not suitable pipistrelle bat roosting habitat being draughty and very open. No evidence of use by bats was noted.



Plate 6: A new stable is to be built at the end. This will be of a similar construction and will be suitable for swallows if it is kept open.

Appendix 2: Location map of Overton View:

