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ADDITIONAL BAT REPORT

CEFN BYCHAN CHAPEL

NEWBRIDGE ROAD

NEWBRIDGE, WREXHAM

LL14 3JA

20th March 2013

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1. INTRODUCTION

A preliminary bat and bird survey was undertaken on the 28th January 2010. The survey was carried out by David Bennett, a licensed and experienced bat surveyor and ecologist (CCW & Natural England licenses) following a request by Mr Phil Jones the original owner of the property. The survey was requested to satisfy planning requirements in respect of any protected species issues at Cefyn Bychan Chapel, Newbridge, Wrexham, LL14 3JA. A planning consent was being sought to permit the conversion of the chapel into residential accommodation.

Following that survey planning approval was obtained and the site has now been sold to the new owners. They are in the process of converting it into residential accommodation. As part of the planning approval certain mitigation works have been requested in respect of bats as well as a follow up visit to check if there have been any changes since the initial survey. The follow up inspection was undertaken on the 19th March 2013.

2. BAT BIOLOGY

There are now 17 species of bat in the UK, many of which can be found within this part of Wales. 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.

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 have a tendency 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. Section 74 (2) of the CroW Act 2000 (now updated by Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 requires the publication of lists of habitats and species that are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biological diversity. The list is regularly changed and updated and many bat species appear on it. NERC consolidates the requirements of the CroW Act in placing duties upon government agencies, including local authorities, to ensure the conservation of Biodiversity.

4. AIMS

The aims of the follow up survey were:

1. To describe any evidence of bats in the study area.
2. To assess the impact of converting the chapel.
3. To suggest mitigation measures as appropriate.

5. STUDY AREA

Cefn Bychan Chapel is located directly adjacent to the railway line in Newbridge, Wrexham, LL14 3JA. The former Baptist chapel which is Grade 11 Listed comprises the main chapel with a small attached schoolroom. The surrounding habitat comprises residential housing to the north and improved fields to the south.

The chapel is constructed in a traditional manner adopting load bearing stone walls, supporting a pitched timber framed roof covered with slates (torched lime which is fairly intact), a few holes are present and the roof has been patched in many places.

The small schoolroom is constructed from brick and also has a slate roof which does not have the benefit of underfelt. Dense ivy had developed to the rear of the chapel and partially along the side walls; in places the ivy had penetrated the interior of the building. Much of the ivy has now been treated or removed to avoid any further damage to the roof and walls.

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

6. METHODOLOGY

The building was subjected to a follow up inspection on the 20th March 2013, the weather conditions were cold, 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 and a Petzl head torch (paying particular attention to the roof sections, ledges and gaps in the brickwork and any timber joints). 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

Since the initial survey in 2010 some works have been undertaken to the inside of the chapel, externally it looks much the same. Internally a mezzanine floor has been fitted which provides access to a first floor which then provides access via a loft ladder into the main loft space. Electric lighting has also been fitted into the loft space now as well as some plumbing fitments. The ceiling of the former schoolroom has now been removed and all areas are exposed.

No evidence of bats was found anywhere within the building and it apart from the changes it seemed to be the same. There was no evidence of droppings or any other evidence to suggest bat presence. The roof is untouched apart from a few repairs to leaks and the cobwebs are still present suggesting no movement in that area. All areas beneath the roof can be viewed because there is no underfelt.

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 conversion in respect of bats at the present time **and the potential for occurrence is low**. 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. Therefore the following precautionary recommendations should be undertaken as good working practice during the remaining stages of the conversion.

- All ridge and roof tiles should be removed by hand to ensure that no torpid or hibernating bats are injured during the building works. The roof tiles should not be removed during the period November to March inclusive to avoid the possibility of harming hibernating bats.
- Abutment flashing should also be removed with care to ensure that no torpid or hibernating bats are injured during the building works.
- Door and window frames should be removed with care to ensure that no torpid or hibernating bats are injured during the building works.
- Structural members, lintel bearings, purlins or wall plates should be removed with care to ensure that no torpid or hibernating bats are injured during the building works.
- In the event that bats were found during the conversion then all work should cease and CCW (Mold office) and/or a licensed bat worker should be contacted for further advice.

The conversion of the chapel offers the opportunity to create some bat friendly features within the final conversion. *Pipistrelle sp.* and other crevice dwellers such as *Myotis* bats will readily take to new and/or converted buildings as long as suitable access points and features are created.

The following features will be included in the conversion to try and encourage bats to use the building post conversion.

- Install ten of the ridge tiles using option A or B in the attached example to allow bats access to the space below the tiles.
- Fix three Schwegler 1FR bat boxes to the external walls. Two should be fixed to the south-east facing wall and one to the north-west facing wall as shown in the photo below. Each box should be installed approximately one metre below the eaves. They can either be installed against the wall or sunk into the wall although that may not be possible with the existing wall structure.
- Ensure all timber treatment is undertaken using chemicals shown to be safe for bats, a certificate should be obtained.

10. REFERENCES

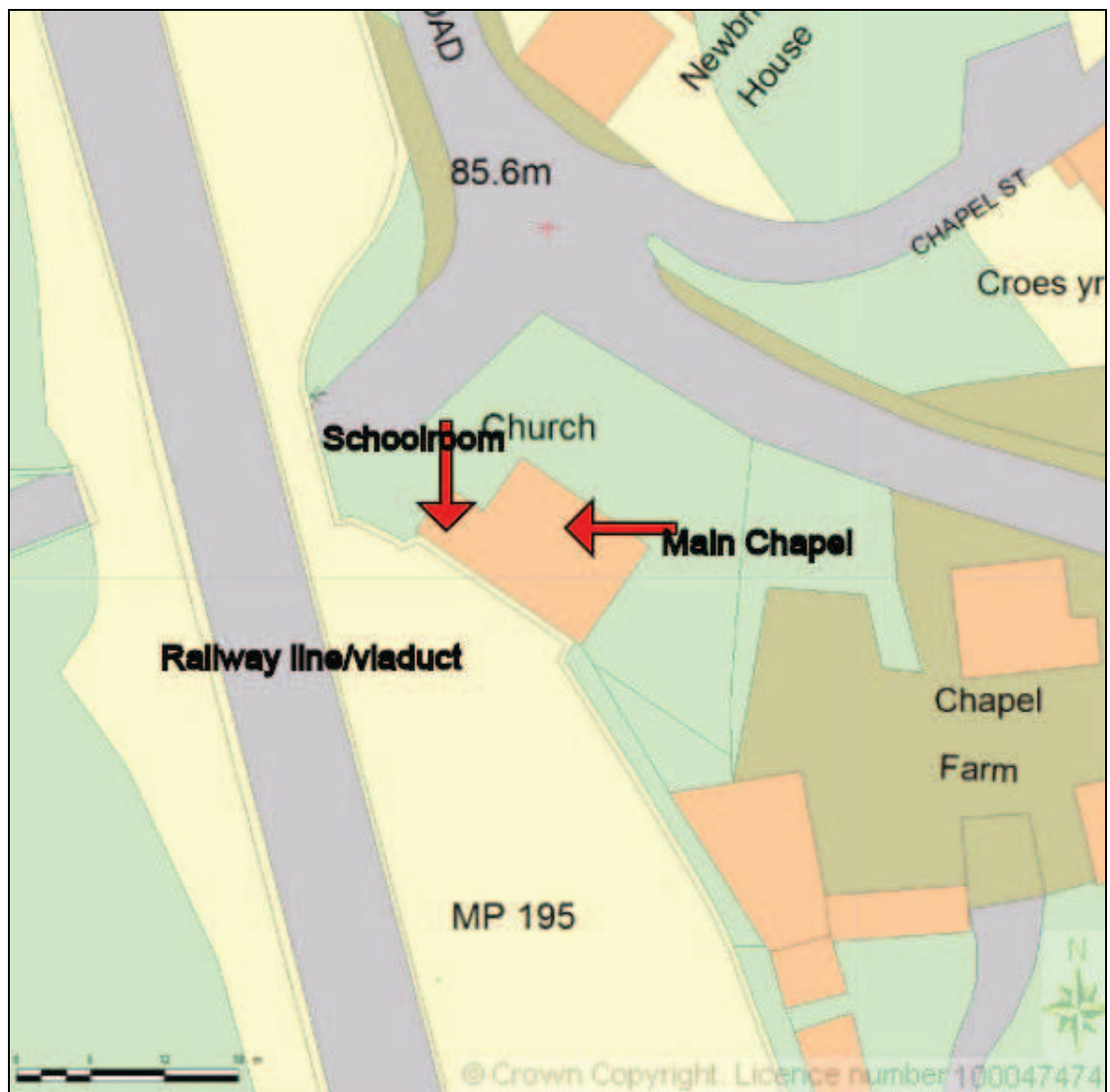
BCT 2007 *Bat Survey Guidelines* London UK

English Nature 2002 *Bats in roofs: a guide for surveyors* English Nature Peterborough UK

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

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

Appendix 1 – Existing site plan



Appendix 2 – Site photos

1. Front elevation



2. Side elevation facing south-east – two Schwegler 1FR bat boxes to be installed



3. Side elevation with view to rear



4. Side elevation including schoolroom facing north-west with single Schwegler 1FR bat box to be installed.

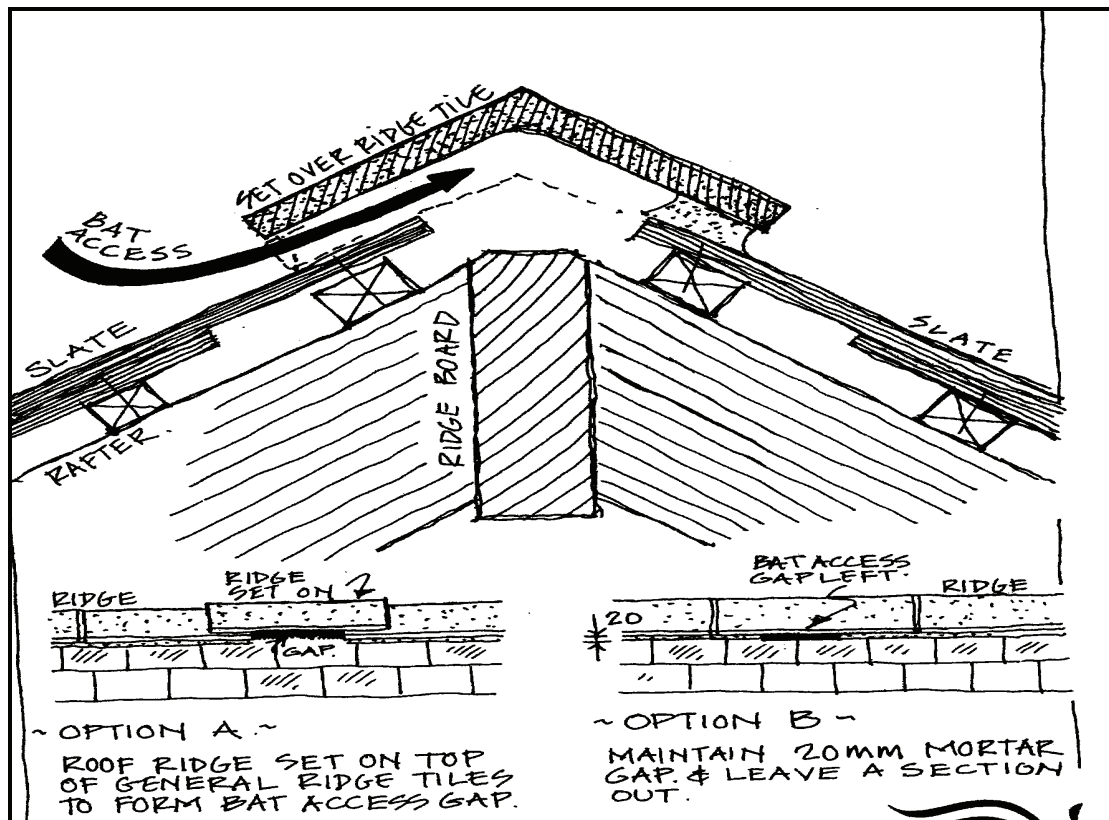


5. Schoolroom



Appendix 3 – Bat mitigation

Ridge tile access



Schwegler 1FR bat box

