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PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEY

LONG VIEW

BRYN ROAD, MOSS

WREXHAM, NORTH WALES

FOR

Mr Alistair Jones

24th March 2011

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1. INTRODUCTION

A preliminary bat and bird survey was undertaken on the 23rd March 2011. The survey was carried out by David Bennett, a licensed and experienced bat surveyor and ecologist (CCW & 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 a building known as Longview, Bryn Road, Moss, Wrexham, North Wales. A planning consent is being sought to permit the demolition of the building as part of a planning application.

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. The Habitats Directive has recently been superseded by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 which came into force on the 1st April 2010

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 survey were:

1. To describe any evidence of protected species in the study area.
2. To assess the impact of demolishing the buildings.
3. To suggest mitigation measures as appropriate.

5. STUDY AREA

The site consists of a detached house situated in an exposed and elevated position. It is constructed in a traditional manner adopting load bearing rendered stone walls, supporting a pitched timber framed roof covered with slates. The house has a small loft space, only one small section has roof-felt the remainder has lime mortar.

Adjacent to the house is a small stone/block detached garage with a monopitch asbestos sheet roof. There is also a small timber shed on the western boundary which is partially derelict.

The property lies within a residential location and is surrounded by a variety of modern and older properties with gardens. The Moss Valley Golf Club (and other areas of open space) is located approximately 300 metres north and east of the property.

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

6. METHODOLOGY

The buildings were subjected to an internal and external survey on the 23rd March 2011; the weather conditions were mild, sunny and clear. As much of the buildings 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 in the stonework). 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

House

No evidence of bats was found anywhere inside or outside of the building. No droppings were apparent on the floor, roof and wall areas and there were no signs of feeding perches. The internal roof timbers are not very large and do not support any features suitable for roosting bats. The loft space is quite small and is covered in an extremely dense layer of dust and hanging cobwebs. The presence of these cobwebs would be detrimental to roosting bats and in this situation they would also have the advantage of catching any droppings from past roosting bats.

Externally the house is very well sealed around the roof area. The gable ends do not support weather boards and are completely sealed with mortar. The small section of boxed soffit shown in the photo is well sealed to the wall with no gaps. The timber boarding supporting the gutters is very tight to the wall with insufficient gaps which bats could use. The flashing on the chimney is very tight to the brickwork with no obvious gaps. The potential for this building to support bats is low.

Garage and timber sheds

The garage building is unsuitable for use by bats. The timber sheds are in a very poor condition and are unsuitable for bats.

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 demolition 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, some 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 demolition phase.

- **All roof tiles should be removed by hand to ensure that no torpid or hibernating bats are injured during the proposed works.**
- **Door and window frames should be removed with care to ensure that no 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 torpid or hibernating bats are injured during the proposed works.
- In the event that bats were found during the demolition then all work should cease and CCW (Mold office) and/or a licensed bat worker should be contacted for further advice.

The creation of new dwellings offers the opportunity to create and retain some bat friendly features. *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 retained or created

To secure biodiversity enhancement in accordance with Welsh Assembly Government guidance TAN 5 it is suggested that some of the following features could be included within any new development to try and encourage bats to use the buildings.

Pictures of the examples are shown in Appendix 3.

- Use traditional bitumen roofing felt rather than plastic membrane which bats have difficulty clinging onto.
- Install two or three of the ridge tiles using option A or B in the attached example to allow bats access to the spaces below the tiles.
- Install purpose made bat bricks into the south or west facing external walls (Ibstock for example).
- Permit access under the eaves (behind timber boards) to the gap along the top of the walls.
- If boxed soffits are proposed then slits can be cut as shown in the drawings below.
- Where possible ensure any external lighting is low level and directional towards the ground.

9. NESTING BIRDS

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 August).

No evidence could be seen in respect of nesting birds. The timber sheds (which are partially collapsed) are covered in very dense ivy. It is very likely that this will support species of nesting bird. Therefore it is recommended that the sheds should only be demolished between October and February inclusive.

Care should be taken if undertaking any works during the bird nesting season to avoid any disturbance. If a nest was found (or in the course of being made) then all work should cease until the young have fledged. Particular care should be taken with swallows because they will often be present until well into September.

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 – Site plan



Appendix 2 – Site Photos

1. East elevation



2. North west elevation



3. North elevation



4. Completely sealed at gable ends



5. Timber boarding supporting gutters has no gaps large enough for bats or birds



6. Interior of the loft has dense cobwebs and dust throughout



7. Small boxed section is completely sealed with no gaps



8. Garage



9. Timber sheds



Appendix 3 – Bat mitigation





