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Greenways Farm, Whitchurch

Bat and Nesting Bird Assessment

Greenways Farm
Tarts Hill
Whitchurch
Cheshire
SY13 3DR

Produced by P J Ecological Solutions on behalf of Fran Armitage

June 2026

Version 1

Report by Matthew Whitehead
Reviewed by Paul Roberts

Executive Summary

P J Ecological Solutions have been commissioned by Fran Armitage to undertake a protected species survey of an outbuilding at Greenways Farm, Whitchurch.

The survey was commissioned to ascertain whether the proposed works thereto have the potential to affect protected species, particularly bats and nesting birds, and to make recommendations as appropriate. The proposals are for the conversion of the outbuilding to holiday let accommodation.

The survey results indicate that the outbuilding does not currently support roosting bats birds. Further, bat activity around the site appears to be limited. However, a single small bird, of indeterminate species, has been observed nesting within a crevice within the building's southeast gable verge.

As such, no adverse impacts upon roosting bats are expected from the proposed development; however, in the absence of mitigation, the proposed development risks causing harm to wild birds or their nests and is likely to result in the loss of nesting habitat.

Accordingly, to avoid harm to nesting birds, the removal phase of the proposed works will be undertaken outside of the peak nesting period (March to August exclusive). If, for any reason, it is necessary to undertake such works within this period, then a suitably qualified ecologist will be engaged to undertake a nesting bird check of the building immediately prior to the commencement of the works, with the works only to proceed if no active nests are found.

In addition, as compensation for the nesting habitat to be lost, 2 No. Vivara Pro Seville Nest Boxes (1 x 32mm hole, 1 x 28mm hole) will be erected upon the same gable as the existing nest prior to the commencement of works. These will be erected between 1.5 and 3m from the ground, away from any immediate clutter or artificial light spill, and ≥3m apart.

No specific mitigation measures for roosting bats are recommended, and no further surveys are recommended. However, if works are delayed into the active season for bats (May to September, inclusive) 2028, then a suitably qualified ecologist must be instructed to provide a revised assessment of the likely impacts of the proposed development. In the unlikely event that a bat (or nesting bird) is found during the works, the procedure detailed in Appendix 1 will be followed.

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1 Introduction

P J Ecological Solutions have been commissioned by Fran Armitage to undertake a protected species survey of an outbuilding at Greenways Farm, Tarts Hill, Whitchurch, Cheshire, SY13 3DR (Grid Reference: SJ43113909; hereafter referred to as 'the site').

The site comprises a detached outbuilding to an historic farmhouse, which is set in a rural location ~1.2km southeast of the village of Penley (see Figure 1.1). The sites surrounds are characterised by vast areas of permanent pasture, populated with various farmyards, small broadleaved woodlands, and numerous ponds. Good examples of intact traditional boundary hedgerows with trees cross the local landscape, which will provide good local habitat connectivity.

The survey was commissioned to ascertain whether the proposed works thereto have the potential to affect protected species, particularly bats and nesting birds, and to make recommendations as appropriate. The proposals are for the conversion of the outbuilding to holiday let accommodation.

A detailed desk study of the surrounding area and a preliminary roost assessment and nesting bird assessment of the building has been undertaken, in addition to a single bat emergence survey. The aim of these efforts/this appraisal is to:

- Identify potential and actual habitat and species constraints pertinent to the development proposals.

- Detail further survey requirements and/or reasonable avoidance measures which should be adhered to during the proposed works, as appropriate.

- Identify opportunities for the proposed development to provide enhancements and add to the biodiversity resource within the site.

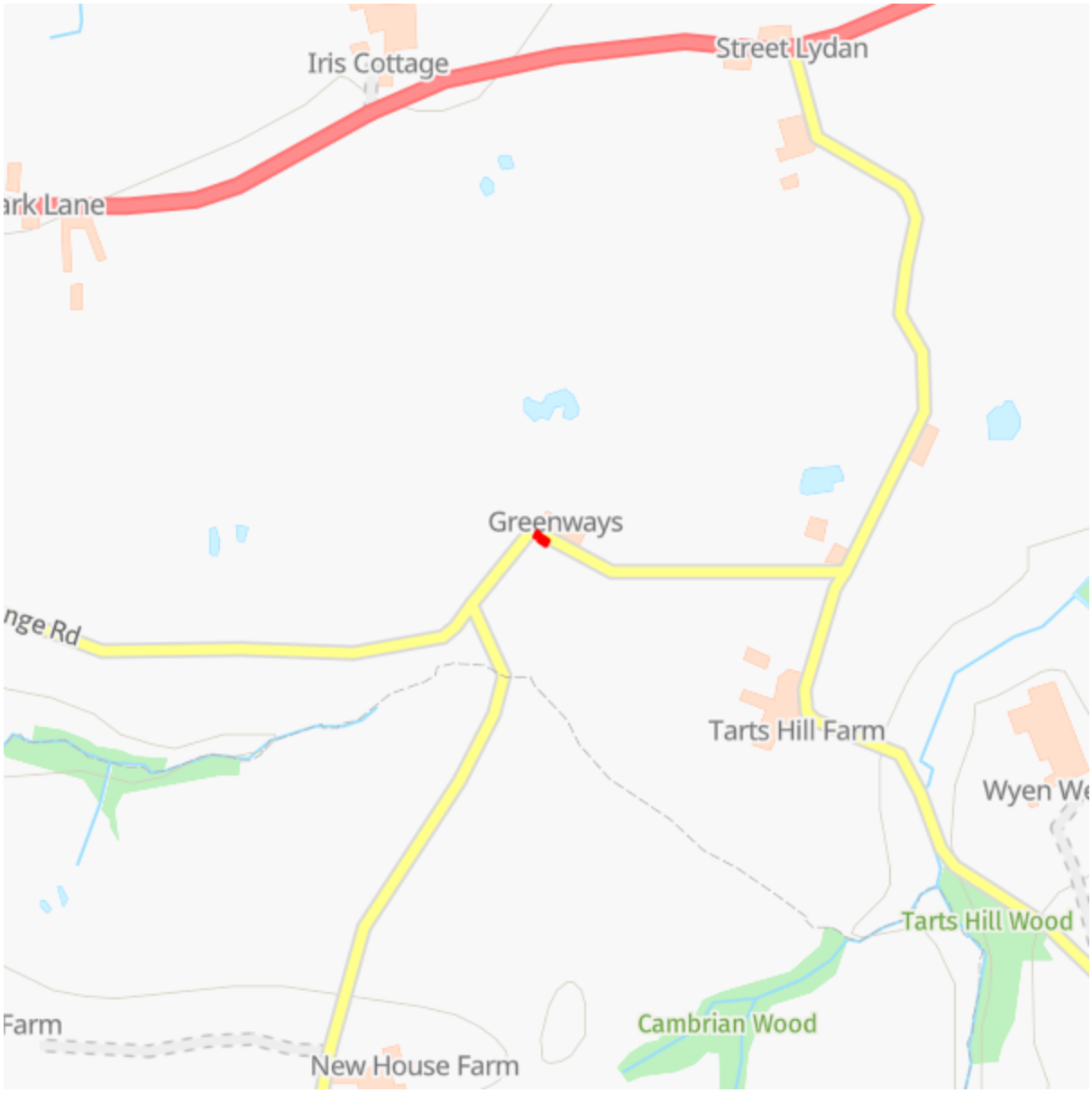


Figure 1.1: A 1:10,000 map view of the site (in red) and its immediate surrounds.

2 Method

2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 Statutory and Non-Statutory Designated Sites

A desk-based study was undertaken to identify nearby habitats of importance and features providing local habitat connectivity, and to identify the presence of statutory and non-statutory designated sites within the vicinity of the site. These include:

- ***International recognised statutory designations:*** Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar Sites.

- ***National recognised statutory designations:*** Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs).

- ***Local level non-statutory designations:*** County Wildlife Sites (CWSs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), North Wales Wildlife Trust Reserves (NWWT reserves), and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Reserves (RSPB reserves).

The search (1km radius) was carried out using the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website's interactive mapping application, and the Natural Resources Wales (NRW) website's Designated Site Search function.

2.1.2 Species Records Pertinent to the Assessment

A full records search from the local environmental records centre has not been undertaken at this stage of the project; however, a search (1km radius) for species records pertinent to the assessment was undertaken using the interactive mapping applications available on the MAGIC, DataMapWales and National Biodiversity Network (NBN) websites.

2.2 Preliminary Roost Assessment

A preliminary roost assessment of the building was undertaken on the 24th of March 2026 by Paul Roberts UCert (NRW Bat Survey License Number: S094855/1) and Matthew Whitehead BSc (Hons) MRSB (NRW Bat Survey License Number: S095607/1), both of whom are experienced ecological consultants familiar with the local area, in accordance with the methodology described within *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (Bat Conservation Trust, 2023). Where appropriate, potential roosting features were accessed using a suitably tall ladder and inspected using a Clulite CB2-L2 high-powered torch and a Eazyview Tradesman fiberscope. The building was then categorised in accordance with Table 4.1 of that document.

During the inspection, note was made of the number and nature of any potential roosting features, and/or of any points of entry/exit, such as:

- Cracks or crevices within walls; lifted paintwork, render, plaster, felt, or lead flashing; loose or lifted roof tiles or ridge tiles; loose windowsills and window frames, gaps behind fascias, soffits, bargeboards, weatherboard or hanging tiles; exposed eaves or wall plates; aged or badly fitted wooden roof supports; or thick vegetation cover.

- Holes within the walls or roof; broken/missing doors or windows; gaps between the walls and fascias, soffits or bargeboards; exposed eaves or wall plates; basement grills; broken ventilation outlets; or points of vegetation penetration.

A search for bats or evidence thereof (such as droppings, claw marks, or oil or urine staining) was undertaken, paying especial attention to:

- Gaps behind furnishings, such as curtains, pictures, and posters; accessible cupboards; peeling paintwork; chimneys accessible from fireplaces; loose wooden panelling; lintels above doors; roof timbers and beams (especially within mortise and tenon joints and where ridge and hip beams meet); at the top of gable end walls, connecting walls, and chimney breasts; and behind roofing felt.

During the inspection of the building, notes were made of any evidence of current or historic use by nesting birds.

2.1 Bat Emergence Surveys

Based upon the results of the above, a single bat emergence survey was carried out in accordance with the methodology prescribed within *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (Bat Conservation Trust, 2023). The survey was undertaken by Matthew Whitehead using Canon XA70, Canon XA50, Panasonic HC-VX980EB-K and Nightfox Whisker infrared cameras, each of which was paired with a Pettersson M500-384 or PeerSonic RPA3 bat detector (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2) The survey was undertaken under the conditions detailed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: The conditions details of the emergence survey undertaken.

Type of Survey	Date and Time	Weather Conditions at Sunset/Sunrise
Emergence Survey	08th June 2026 21.00 – 23.05	Sunset Time: 21.33; 12°C, Dry, Negligible Wind, 10% Cloud Cover

The emergence survey was undertaken in June, in dry and calm conditions, when the temperature at sunset was above 10°C, all of which is in accordance with the good practive guidelines provided in Section 7 of the Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (2023). The survey commenced at least 30 minutes before sunset and continued until at least 90 minutes after sunset. As such there are no limitations associated with the timing and weather conditions of the survey.

N.B: Bat emergence surveys can only give a snapshot of bat behaviour at the time of the survey. As the potential of the site for roosting bats may change over time, it is recommended that bat surveys are updated after two years if development has not yet commenced.



Figure 2.1: A 1:500 map view showing the positions of the surveyors/equipment during the emergence survey. The building to be modified is shown in red.



Figure 2.2: The field of view of each of the cameras used at the darkest part of the survey (Top Left: Camera 1 – the Canon XA70; Top Right: Camera 2 – the Canon XA50; Bottom Left: Camera 3 – the Panasonic HC-VX980EB-K; Bottom Right: Camera 4 – the Nightfox Whisker). All footage was reviewed in real-time using the open-source PotPlayer software. All sonograms were manually reviewed using the SonoBat 30 UK bat call analysis software.

3 Results

3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 Statutory and Non-Statutory Designated Sites

A review of the information retrieved during the desk study identified no statutory designated sites within 1km of the site (see Figure 3.1). As such and given the nature of the proposals and scale of the project, the proposed development is not expected to have any adverse impacts upon any such sites.

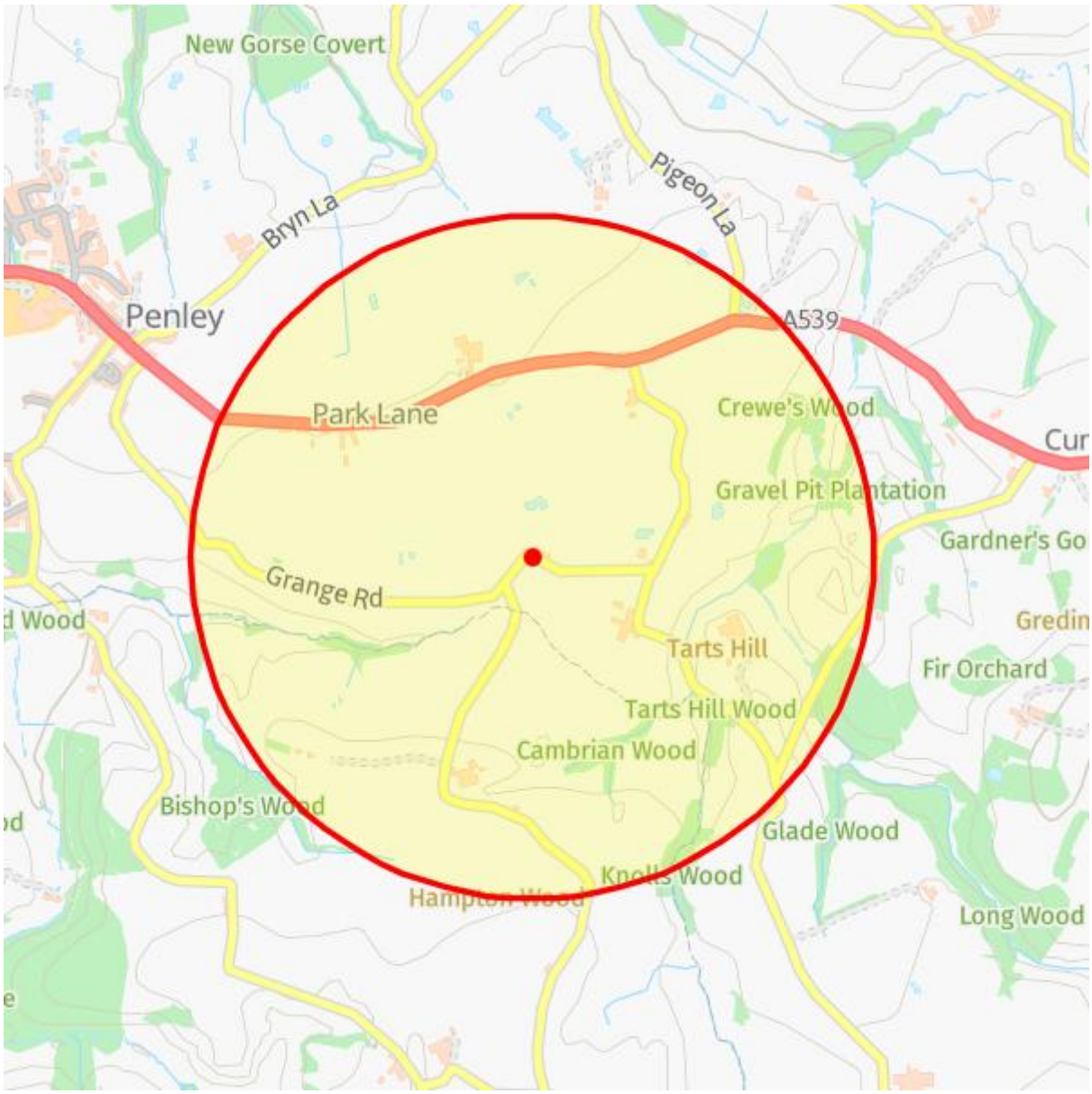


Figure 3.1: A 1:25,000 map view of the site relative to local designated sites.

3.1.2 Species Records Pertinent to the Assessment

None of the species records retrieved during the desk study provide cause for expanding the scope of the protected species survey beyond bats and nesting birds.

*N.B: P J Ecological Solutions is aware of local records of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*); however, given that the nearest pond to the site is >130m away, given the modest nature of the proposals, and given that the habitats within or immediate to the site are restricted to the outbuilding itself, hardstanding, and grassland which is permanently maintained at a short sward, surveys of the surrounding area for this species are considered disproportionate to the development proposals.*

3.2 Preliminary Roost Assessment

A description of the outbuilding is provided in Table 3.1, below.

Table 3.1: The extension to be modified.

Exterior Fabric and Features	
Structure	• The building is a detached single-storey rectangular structure which features a symmetrically pitched roof, the apex of which runs from northwest to southeast. An open-sided garage area adjoins the building's southeast gable.
Walls	• The building's walls are constructed of modern brick and are faced in a coat of intact render. There are no obvious gaps or crevices or areas of cracked or lifted render present anywhere.
Roof	• The building's roof is constructed of slate tiles and features angled ridge tiles and is generally in a good state of repair; however, there are a small number of slipped or missing tiles along the building's rear (southwest) elevation and two ridge tiles have been laid over their neighbours to provide ventilation, which could provide bats access to the building's ridge void.
Soffits, fascias and bargeboards	• The building does not feature any formal fascias, soffits or bargeboards. Whilst the wet verge is intact, gaps are present where the eaves overhang the wall tops along the building's rear (southwest) elevation.
Windows, doors, and other points of access	• The building's doors and windows are mostly present and intact or otherwise boarded. The window within the building's rear (southwest) elevation is broken and has not been boarded but has been covered with some form of mesh.
External lighting	• There is no significant artificial light spill onto or anywhere around the building, which is set in a local 'dark zone'.
Vegetation cover	• There is no vegetation growth onto or immediate to any part of the building.
Interior Fabric and Features	
Structure and Roof Structure	• The building's interior comprises a single open space without a roof void separate to the interior main. The roof is unlined.
Light Penetration and Weatherproofing	• The interior of the building is generally a dark and weatherproof space, although some natural light penetration can be seen from the broken window within the building's rear (southwest) elevation
Evidence of Roosting Bats or Nesting Birds	
Evidence of bats or bat roosts	• No evidence of roosting bats was found during the internal or external inspection of the building.
Evidence of nesting birds	• No evidence of nesting birds was found during the internal or external inspection of the building.

N.B: The open-sided garage area which adjoins the building's southeast gable is constructed of corrugated metal sheeting and is wholly unsuited to the needs of roosting bats.

Photographs showing the above features and findings are included below (see Figures 3.2 to 3.7).



Figure 3.2: The northeast (front) and southeast (gable) elevations of the outbuilding.



Figure 3.3: The northwest (gable) and southwest (rear) elevations of the outbuilding.



Figure 3.4: The construction and condition of the outbuilding's roof.



Figure 3.5: The construction and condition of the outbuilding's roofline.



Figure 3.6: The outbuilding's interior space.



Figure 3.7: The garage which adjoins the outbuilding.

3.3 Emergence Surveys

08th of June 2026: No bats were observed emerging from the building during the survey and bat activity around the site appeared to be limited. Common pipistrelle bats (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) were recorded in the vicinity of the site at 22.10 at 22.16, at 22.20, at 22.22, at 22.23, at 22.27, and at 22.55; whiskered/Brandt's bats (*Myotis mystacinus/brandtii*) were recorded to the southwest of the site at 22.34 and at 22.38; a common noctule bat (*Nyctalus noctula*) was recorded in the vicinity of the site at 22.54; and a brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*) was recorded to the north of the site at 22.58. No other bats were recorded or observed during the survey.

During the survey, a small bird, of indeterminate species, was observed entering a crevice within the outbuilding's southeast gable verge (see Figure 3.8).



Figure 3.8: The crevice which the bird was observed entering (in red).

4 Evaluation

No evidence of roosting bats was found during the preliminary roost assessment and the outbuilding's walls, roof and roofline are generally in a good state of repair. However, there are a small number of slipped or missing tiles along the building's rear, there are two raised ridge tiles, and some minor gaps are present where the eaves overhang the wall tops along the building's rear. Accordingly, the building was categorised as having low potential to support roosting bats.

Based on this assessment, a single bat emergence survey was undertaken to determine whether any roosts are present, during which no bats were observed emerging from any part of the building. The surveys undertaken were not affected by any material limitations.

No evidence of nesting birds was found during the preliminary roost assessment; however, a single small bird, of indeterminate species, was observed entering a crevice within the outbuilding's southeast gable verge during the emergence survey.

5 Impact Assessment

The survey results indicate that the outbuilding does not currently support roosting bats birds. Further, bat activity around the site appears to be limited. However, a single small bird, of indeterminate species, has been observed entering (possibly nesting) within a crevice within the building's southeast gable verge.

As such, no adverse impacts upon roosting bats are expected from the proposed development; however, in the absence of mitigation, the proposed development risks causing harm to wild birds or their nests and is likely to result in the loss of nesting habitat.

6 Required Actions

No specific mitigation measures for roosting bats are recommended, and no further surveys are recommended. However, if works are delayed into the active season for bats (May to September, inclusive) 2028, then a suitably qualified ecologist must be instructed to provide a revised assessment of the likely impacts of the proposed development. In the unlikely event that a bat (or nesting bird) is found during the works, the procedure detailed in Appendix 1 should be followed.

To avoid harm to nesting birds, the removal phase of the proposed works will be undertaken outside of the peak nesting period (March to August exclusive). If, for any reason, it is necessary to undertake such works within this period, then a suitably qualified ecologist will be engaged to undertake a nesting bird check of the building immediately prior to the commencement of the works, with the works only to proceed if no active nests are found.

As compensation for the nesting habitat to be lost, 2 No. Vivara Pro Seville Nest Boxes (1 x 32mm hole, 1 x 28mm hole) will be erected upon the same gable as the existing nest prior to the commencement of works. These will be erected between 1.5 and 3m from the ground, away from any immediate clutter or artificial light spill, and ≥3m apart.

Appendix 1: PWMS (Bats and Nesting Birds)

Procedure to follow if bats or nesting birds are discovered during works

- In the highly unlikely event that a bat is discovered during the works, then contractors must stop work immediately and telephone P J Ecological Solutions on 07545 681586.

- P J Ecological Solutions will either provide an appropriately licensed bat worker to the site or provide a member of staff who will liaise directly with Natural Resources Wales. Actions will then be taken following advice given. This may include removal of bats, but only where direct written or verbal permission is gained from Natural Resources Wales. Bats are a protected species and under no circumstances should contractors attempt to handle a bat.

- If a bat is found under roofing material or within any other niche to the building fabric, and does not voluntarily fly out, then the aperture should be carefully covered over by the last object removed (so long as there is no risk of crushing) to protect the bat from the elements, leaving a small gap for the bat to escape voluntarily. If it should be necessary to improvise a replacement covering, this should be free from grease or other contaminants and should not be a fibreglass-based material. If a bat is found outside of the buildings, it should be covered with a light material (cloth) and the appropriately licensed bat worker awaited to carry out the rescue.

- Only when Natural Resources Wales is satisfied that the risk to bats is ceased will works recommence. Should it emerge that the works being undertaken are of more risk to bats than was originally thought, then works will be stopped until they can be supervised by an appropriately licensed bat worker.

- If a nesting bird/active nest is discovered during the works, all works within 5m of the nest must cease and a 5m exclusion zone should be established. This exclusion zone must be respected until it has been determined that all of the chicks have fledged.

Appendix 2: Biodiversity Enhancement Provisions

To comply with Section 6 of the *Environment (Wales) Act 2016*, local planning authorities are required to look for biodiversity gain within the planning system. Accordingly, as biodiversity enhancement provisions, it has been agreed that 1 No. Vivara Pro WoodStone House Sparrow Nest Box (Double Chamber) will be erected upon the modified building and that 1 No. Vivara Pro Large Multi Chamber Bat Box will be erected upon one of the suitable mature trees within the applicant's landholding. In addition, it has been agreed that 2 No. bird cherry trees (*Prunus padus*) will be planted within the applicant's landholding.

The nest box will be installed close to the apex of the modified building's northwest-facing gable, where it will be kept free from any immediate clutter or artificial light spill. The bat box will be installed in a south-facing position, at least 4m from ground level, and will be kept free from immediate clutter or artificial light spill.

The trees will be planted within the first planting season post-completion of the development works (December to March, inclusive) and will be provided with appropriate care (i.e., watering, pruning, use of tree guards, etc.) in accordance with the advice provided by the supplier. Whips or feathered trees may be used; however, any specimens which fail will be replaced at the next appropriate season. Once established, the trees will be managed with minimal interference, so that they are allowed to develop to be of most use for wildlife. The trees may be pruned for aesthetic or safety reasons but will at least be allowed to develop and remain at a height/spread as to be able to blossom and fruit.

Appendix 3: Green Infrastructure Statement

The existing habitats within or immediate to the site are restricted to the building to be modified and the surrounding areas of hardstanding and maintained grass only. The proposed works will result in the modification of the building only. The survey results indicated that the areas of the building to be modified do not support roosting bats, although nesting birds have been identified within its southeast gable wall. However, as detailed in Section 6, reasonable avoidance measures are to be implemented to mitigate the risk of harm to nesting birds and compensatory nesting habitat is to be provided. As such, no green infrastructure is expected to be lost because of the proposed development.

However, new/additional green infrastructure is to be provided via the erection of 1 No. Vivara Pro WoodStone House Sparrow Nest Box (Double Chamber) and 1 No. Vivara Pro Large Multi Chamber Bat Box on site, and via the planting of 2 No. new bird cherry trees.

Therefore, as no green infrastructure is expected to be lost because of the proposed development, and subject to the delivery of the above provisions, the development is expected to result in a clear net benefit for biodiversity/a clear net gain in local green infrastructure.

The 'stepwise approach' should be adopted throughout the design stage of all new developments in Wales. This means that the loss of existing green infrastructure should be avoided whenever possible, and when it is not possible to avoid the loss of or damage to the existing green infrastructure entirely, the extent of the loss or damage should be minimised to the greatest extent possible. When a proposed development poses a risk of harm to green infrastructure, protected habitats or habitats of principal importance, or protected species or species of principle importance, suitable mitigation should be incorporated into the proposed scheme of works to safeguard that green infrastructure/those habitats and species to the greatest extent possible. Finally, if the loss of green infrastructure cannot be avoided, minimised or mitigated for, suitable on-site compensation should be incorporated into the design of the development.