

POBL GROUP

TY MAWR, PONTARDAWE

BAT BUILDING INSPECTION AND ACTIVITY REPORT

26 November 2021



Telephone:- 07969146776
e-mail:- davidrees220@hotmail.com

POBL GROUP

TY MAWR, PONTARDAWE

BAT BUILDING INSPECTION AND ACTIVITY REPORT

Document Ref: Doc 01 – 26/11/2021

Issue	Revision	Stage	Date	Prepared by
1		DRAFT FOR REVIEW	26/11/2021	David Rees

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Methodology

Desk study

Daytime Inspection Survey

3.0 Results

Desk study

Daytime Inspection Survey

4.0 Legislation, Policies and Plans

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

References

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 David Rees was commissioned to undertake a building inspection with particular regard to the likely presence of roosting bats and nesting birds at the disused Ty Mawr structure located in Pontardawe (Grid Ref: SN 72269 03650). The structure is proposed to be renovated with an extension constructed on the south western elevation.
- 1.2 An external and internal inspection of the barn was conducted on the 28th August 2021 by David Rees whom is a suitably experienced ecologist¹. The building is a two storey rendered structure with a pitched slate roof that possesses a large skylight. The structure has an associated curtilage of amenity grassland and standard trees that are bordered by a species poor hedgerow to the south and east. The site is bordered by residential properties to the north, south and east; whilst a retail park and boundary waste/grassland was located to the west. The River Tawe riparian corridor was located approximately 50m south east of site and was considered to be suitable foraging and commuting habitat.
- 1.3 The building as a whole was generally in a good condition with only limited bat roosting features associated with the rear single storey porch and a single hole in a ridge tile located on the south western gable end; and was considered to be of low bat roosting potential as described within the BCT 2016 Guidelines, requiring a further bat survey to establish whether the building is utilised by roosting bats. During August 2021 a dusk survey was conducted at the structure by three experienced surveyors.
- 1.4 This report provides a summary of the daytime inspection and bat activity report undertaken in August 2021 (respectively), and includes recommendations on any ecological constraints/ opportunities associated with the proposed works.

¹ Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management with 5+ years experience in bat survey work & NRW bat licence holder S090295/1.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 In order to establish the baseline ecological conditions on site and in the adjoining habitats, a combination of desk-based consultation and building inspection was undertaken August 2021.

Desk study

- 2.2 This element of the work primarily involved an internet data search to identify any known records of bats or nesting birds onsite or within the surrounding area (within 2km and 1km radius respectively) that could require consideration as part of any development proposal (i.e. to inform constraints/opportunities).

Daytime Inspection

- 2.3 The ecological appraisal comprised of an external and internal inspection of the structure. In order to establish the potential presence of roosting bats (or nesting birds) at the building, the survey aimed to identify:
- if bats are, or have been, present within the building and, if so, which species are present;
 - the type of roost (e.g. day roost, feeding perch, night roost, hibernaculum);
 - how bats use the buildings (e.g. location of, exit and entrance points to potential roosts);
- 2.4 External surveys at the site involved the use of binoculars and ladder to identify possible access/entry points into the buildings and aimed to identify any evidence of use by bats such as droppings, staining, prey remains etc. The survey was undertaken from ground-level around the exterior of the buildings; and was assisted by the use of close-focus binoculars and a high powered torch (1 million candlepower). No internal inspection was conducted due to access issues.

Bat Activity Surveys

- 2.5 The daytime inspection conducted at the barn identified the structure as being of 'low' bat roosting potential (as described in the Bat Conservation Trust 2016 guidelines) due unto the limited potential access points to the roof structure. As described within the guidelines, buildings with Low potential require at least single dusk survey to establish the likelihood of bats being present, with a single survey required between May-August. In order to achieve visual coverage of the potential access/entry points associated with the structure, a team of 2 surveyors were present during the survey.
- 2.6 The dusk emergence survey was undertaken on the 28th August 2021 by three experienced surveyors. The dusk emergence survey commenced 15 minutes prior to sunset and extended for approximately 90 minutes after sunset (BCT, 2016).
- 2.7 Weather conditions were of no constraint to the survey with no precipitation experienced during the dusk survey and a light wind (Beaufort 1-2). A maximum temperature of 18°C and a minimum of 17°C was recorded during the survey.
- 2.8 Surveyors were positioned to ensure maximum coverage of the buildings, with the surveyors located north, south west and east of the structure. Full spectrum detectors (Peersonic & Echo Meter Touch 2) were used to allow both in field and office based sonogram analysis of bat calls. All calls were recorded and identified on computer-based sonogram analysis software (Wavesurfer) and BatClassify.

3.0 RESULTS

Desk study

- 3.1 The internet data search confirmed that there were no records of bats onsite with only two records of Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus* sp. Identified within a 2km radius. However, multiple records of bats were identified within 5km of site, the majority of which were comprised Pipistrelle sp. with smaller number of Myotis sp. and a single Greater Horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* record. The records of the crevice dwelling and free hanging bat species were considered to be of limited relevance to the structure.
- 3.2 A number of roof nesting birds were identified within 1km of site including House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*. The structure possessed features that could potentially be utilised by all the species.

Day-time inspection

Overview

- 3.3 The results of the day-time inspection are summarised in the following sections.

External Survey

- 3.4 The Ty Mawr building was a two-storey structure with a pitched slate roof (Cover Photo & Photo 1) that possessed a large glass skylight (Photo 2). A large ventilation cylinder with a cone shaped top was located at the centre of the roof (Photo 3) and two dormers roofs were located along the north western elevation (Photo 4 & 5). A rear single storey mono pitched roof was located on the south eastern elevation (Photo 6). The structure possessed wooden doors, window frames, soffits and fascias whilst metal rainwater goods were evident around the structure. However, the ground floor windows were boarded up due to vandalism (Photo 7).
- 3.5 The structure was generally in a good condition with very limited potential bat roosting features associated with a single broken ridge tile on the south western extent of the roof (Photo 8) and small gaps under the rear porch roof (Photo 9). No evidence of roosting bats was identified externally.
- 3.6 No internal access was possible to the structure due to access issues. However, the limited potential bat roosting features and absence of bat roosting evidence meant the structure was considered to be of low bat roosting potential (BCT, 2016).

Photo 1: Northern western elevation (view looking south east).



Photo 2: Southern elevation of barn (view looking north east).



Photo 3: Ventilation shaft with cone shaped top.



Photo 4: South western dormer (view looking south east).



Photo 5: North eastern dormer and front entrance.



Photo 6: Rear porch entrance (view looking north).



Photo 7: Boarded up windows on south eastern elevation (view looking north west).



Photo 8: Broken south western Southern elevation's western gable end with exposed stone wall.



Photo 9: Small gaps under rear porch roof (view looking north).



Surrounding Habitat

3.7 The structure's curtilage was comprised of amenity grassland lawns located to the south and east (Photo 10), which possessed standard trees such as Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Silver Birch *Betula pendula* and Copper Norway Maple *Acer platanoides schwedleri*. The lawn area was bordered by a species poor hedgerow that was dominated by Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* (Photo 11). Stands of Cotoneaster were also identified in the site curtilage. Cotoneaster is listed under Schedule 9, Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), making it is an offence "to plant or otherwise encourage" their growth.

Photo 10: Amenity grassland and standard trees (view looking south)..



Photo 11: Species poor hedgerow dominated by Hawthorn.



Bat Emergence Survey Results

Dusk Emergence Survey 28th August 2021

3.8 During the evening emergence survey no bats were seen to emerge from the building with low levels of bat activity recorded around the structure and its curtilage. It was evident that the majority of the structure's elevations (exception being the south eastern elevation) were well lit from the artificial street lighting located on Ynisderw Road and Llys Glanarfon. From both in-field and sonogram analysis it was determined that the calls were made by individual commuting and foraging Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*; whilst individual Noctule *Nyctalus noctule* were identified foraging high above site. The first bat recorded was a Common Pipistrelle recorded commuting from an offsite northern location, flying along Ynisderw Road along the north western elevation to an offsite south western location at 20.23h approximately 23 minutes after sunset (20.00h).

4.0 LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND PLANS

- 4.1 The following international, national and local legislation and planning policies pertaining to bats, nature conservation and biodiversity are considered of some relevance to the renovation and extension works.

Legislation Pertaining to the Protection of Bats

- 4.2 Under Annex II of the *Council Directive 92/43/EEC 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora* (EC Habitats Directive) some bat species are listed as of Community Interest, the conservation of which requires designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); Under Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive all bat species are listed as of Community Interest, in need of strict protection. In England and Wales, the EC Habitats Directive has been transposed into law in 1994 and, following recent amendments is set out in the *Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulation 2010* to give bats, their breeding sites and resting places a high level of strict protection making it an offence (subject to certain specific exceptions) to deliberately capture or kill/injure a bat, to damage or destroy a place used for shelter or protection or to deliberately disturb a bat in such a place.
- 4.3 Bats are also afforded protection within England and Wales under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
- 4.4 Case Law² has placed an onus on local planning authorities to satisfy ‘three tests’ under the Habitats Directive when determining applications that could affect European Protected Species. Essentially, these three tests are: i) that there is no satisfactory alternative; ii) that the proposed development is in the over-riding public interest (including those of a social or economic nature) and iii) the proposed development would not adversely affect the Favourable Conservation Status of the species locally.

Legislation Pertaining to Birds

- 4.5 Under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) all wild birds are protected against killing or injury and their nests against damage or destruction whilst they are being built or contain eggs/dependent young.

² Wooley vs. East Cheshire (2009) and Morge vs. Hampshire County Council (2010)

Planning Policy Wales (2016)

- 4.6 This document set out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) with Chapter 5 dealing with Conserving and Improving Natural Heritage and Coast. The advice contained within PPW is supplemented for some subjects by Technical Advice Notes (TAN), with TAN 5 addressing Nature Conservation and Planning (September 2009).

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 5 – Nature Conservation and Planning

- 4.7 Under Section 2.4 within the TAN 5, *‘when deciding planning applications that may affect nature conservation local planning authorities should’*:
- Protect wildlife and natural features in the wider environment, with appropriate weight attached to priority habitats and species in Biodiversity Action Plans;
 - Ensure that all material considerations are taken into account and decisions are informed by adequate information about the potential effects of development on nature conservation;
 - Ensure that the range and population of protected species is sustained;
 - Adopt a step-wise approach to avoid harm to nature conservation, minimise unavoidable harm by mitigation measures, offset residual harm by compensation measures and look for new opportunities to enhance nature conservation;

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The daytime inspection undertaken at the identified no evidence of roosting bats externally. The structure was in a good condition with only had limited potential bat roosting features associated with a broken ridge tile and a rear porch roof. A further dusk activity survey conducted at the structure did not identify any roosting bats with low bat activity recorded in the immediate vicinity.

5.2 On this basis, it is considered that the proposed renovation and extension works will not require further surveys or a European Protected Species (EPS) derogation licence. However, it is recommended that a precautionary approach to the works be adopted given the itinerant nature of some common bat species identified within a 2km radius of site i.e. Pipistrelle species. The possibility that the structure could potentially be utilised by individual bats on an irregular or occasional basis during future bat activity seasons could not be ruled out (highly unlikely) and a precautionary approach as follows would be appropriate:

- Builders advised prior to the start of works of the low risk that bats (or birds) could be present and the action to take should a bat be discovered (see below);
- Any proposed roof works: Removal of roof to be undertaken by hand or using hand-tools (e.g. crowbars etc.);
- In the unlikely event that a bat were discovered, all works would cease immediately and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) or the project ecologist contacted for advice on how to proceed.

5.3 The survey findings and recommendations described above are considered to provide sufficient information to demonstrate to the local authority that the Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) of bats in the immediate local area would not be adversely affected by the proposed renovation works.

Other considerations

5.4 No evidence of nesting birds was identified on the structure. However, it is recommended that a visual check of the roof features is conducted prior to the commencement of the conversion works. In the unlikely event an active nest was discovered during these works, activity would stop immediately and the project ecologist contacted. All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife Countryside Act 1981.

5.5 The hedgerows and ornamental vegetation associated with the curtilage was considered to be suitable habitat for nesting birds and as such it is recommended that if any vegetation clearance is required it is conducted outside the nesting bird season (March-September inclusive) or proceeded by a visual inspection.

- 5.6 The height of the structure which possesses verges and soffits means that it is potentially possible install Swift *Apus apus* boxes as well as House Martin *Delichon urbicum* & Swallow *Hirundo rustica* nest cups to enhance biodiversity locally.

REFERENCES

- Bat Conservation Trust (2016). *Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines*. Third Edition. Bat Conservation Trust, London.
- EUROPA. (2007). *Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC; Final version, February 2007*.
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/index_en.htm
- Mitchell-Jones, A.J, & McLeish, A.P. Ed., (2004), 3rd Edition Bat Workers' Manual, 178 pages b/w photos, softback, ISBN 1 86107 558 8

