

ROGER BURROWS

25 WERN ROAD, SKEWEN

BAT BUILDING INSPECTION & ACTIVITY SURVEY REPORT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bay Ecology was commissioned by Roger Burrows to undertake a building inspection with particular regard to the likely presence of roosting bats and nesting birds at No 25 Wern Road located in Skewen. The structure is proposed to be renovated.
- 1.2 An external and internal inspection of the structures was undertaken on the 31st May 2022 by David Rees whom is a suitably experienced ecologist¹. The property is a two storey on its southern elevation, which is rough cast structure with a pitched roof and bay window located on the eastern extent of the ground floor. However, the northern elevation is three storey with presence of two storage areas on the ground floor due to the change in levels. The northern elevation also possessed a two storey flat roof annex. The internal inspection identified that the structure was in the process of being renovated, whilst the roof void inspection identified the loft to be dark and draught free with exposed wooden rafters and purlins with no roof felting present and the roof slates evident. The structure was immediately surrounded by residential properties and their curtilages, with Skewen Cricket pitch located approximately 50m south of the site.
- 1.3 Potential access points to the internal structure of all the buildings onsite were identified and associated with missing ridge tiles & ridge mortar, as well as soffit gaps. However, no evidence of roosting bats was identified internally or externally. The presence of multiple potential bat roosting features meant the structures were considered to be of moderate bat roosting potential (BCT, 2016), requiring two further bat surveys to establish whether the building was being utilised by roosting bats. The first dusk survey was conducted on the 29th June 2022, with a second conducted on the 13th July 2022. Two experienced surveyors were used in each dusk survey.
- 1.4 This report provides a summary of the daytime inspections undertaken May 2022 and the bat activity surveys conducted in June & July 2022, and includes recommendations on any ecological constraints/opportunities associated with the proposed renovation 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.

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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 in May 2022.

Desk study

2.2 This element of the work primarily involved an internet search and review of Bay Ecology bat activity reports within close proximity to identify any known records of bats or nesting birds onsite or within the surrounding area (within 2km and 0.15km 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 structures. 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. No access to the internal roof void was possible at the time of the survey due to the theft of the property's key from a key safe box. The internal survey searched for similar evidence of current or historical use by bats.

2.5 The surveyor searched for roost evidence (droppings, staining, scratch marks, etc.) as described above and an assessment of the buildings potential to support nesting birds was also undertaken. The scope of the bat inspection survey was based on guidelines published by the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT)(2016).

Bat Activity Surveys

- 2.6 The daytime inspection conducted at the property identified the structures as being of 'moderate' bat roosting potential (as described in the Bat Conservation Trust 2016 guidelines) due unto the potential bat roosting features identified. As described within the guidelines, buildings with moderate potential require at least a single dusk emergence survey and a dawn re-entry survey conducted at least two weeks apart to establish the likelihood of bats being present, with a single survey required between May-August. However, due to the low levels of bat activity associated with the structure a further dusk was considered sufficient to establish the presence of any further roosting bats in the structure. 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.
- 2.7 The dusk emergence survey was undertaken on the 29th June 2022 by two experienced surveyors. The dusk emergence survey commenced 15 minutes prior to sunset and extended for approximately 90 minutes after sunset (BCT, 2016). Weather conditions were of no constraint to the survey. However, light drizzle was experienced immediately prior to the survey, whilst dry conditions were experienced during the survey and a light wind (Beaufort 1-2). A temperature of 15°C was recorded during the survey.
- 2.8 The dusk emergence survey was undertaken on the 13th July 2022 by two experienced surveyors. Weather conditions were of no constraint to the survey with no precipitation experienced during the survey and a light breeze (Beaufort 1-2). A temperature of 18°C was recorded during the survey.
- 2.9 Surveyors were positioned to ensure maximum coverage of the buildings, with a surveyor located in the rear garden (north east) and on Wern Road (south west) to provide maximum visual coverage. 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 species data search confirmed that there were no records of bats onsite. However, multiple records of foraging bats were identified within 2km of site. The majority of the records were contributed to foraging and commuting Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus sp.* recorded during surveys. However, two records of Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentonii* exist and were the result of Water Way surveys conducted at the Tennant Canal. The above records of crevice dwelling bat species were considered to be of some relevance to site.
- 3.2 A number of roof nesting birds were identified within 0.15km of site including House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* that was considered the species of most relevance to the structures due to their nesting preference.

Day-time inspection

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

External Inspection No.25 Wern Road

- 3.4 The southern elevation of No. 25 Wern Road was a two storey rough cast building with a pitched roof and a bay window located on the eastern extent of the ground floor (Cover & Photo 1). The front access porch was located on the eastern elevation and possessed mono pitch roof (Photo 2). The northern elevation of the building was three storey due to the change in level (Photo 3), with a two storey flat bitumastic roof annex located on the elevation (Photo 4). The ground floor possessed two storage rooms located beneath the habitable upper floors (Photo 5). The structure possessed uPVC windows frames, doors, porch cladding, fascias, soffits and rainwater goods (Photo 6). No evidence of roosting bats (droppings, staining etc.) was identified externally. However, potential multiple potential bat roosting features were associated with the roof, including missing ridge tiles (Photo 7) and missing ridge mortar (Photo 8), as well as soffit gaps (Photo 6).

Photo 1: Southern and western elevations (view looking north east).



Photo 2: Access porch located on eastern elevation (view looking north).



Photo 3: Three storey northern elevation (view looking south).



Photo 4: Two storey rear annex on northern elevation (view looking west).



Photo 5: Two ground floor storage rooms (view looking south west).



Photo 6: uPVC soffit with gaps on eastern elevation.



Photo 7: Missing ridge tiles on rear roof elevation (view looking south).



Photo 8: Missing ridge mortar on front of roof (southern elevation).



Internal Survey

- 3.5 The internal inspection of the roof void identified exposed wooden rafters and purlins with the roof slates evident due to the absence of roof felting (Photo 9). The roof void was dark and draught free with no evidence of roosting bats identified.
- 3.6 Two rear ground level storage rooms were inspected for evidence of roosting bats. Both storage rooms were constructed from brick that had been painted and were dark and draught free (Photos 10 & 11). The rooms contained the possessions of the former property owner with large accumulations of spiderwebs. The rooms were only accessible via the wooden doors and no evidence of roosting bats was identified internally with limited potential roosting features identified.

Overall

- 3.7 The property possessed multiple bat roosting features associated with the roof and as such was considered to be of moderate bat roosting potential (BCT, 2016).

Photo 9: Exposed wooden rafters, purlins and roof slates.



A cluttered interior space, possibly a storage room or workshop, featuring a white brick wall. A red plastic bag hangs from a wooden beam. A long wooden pole leans against the wall. A large, ornate mirror or framed picture is visible on the right side. A white bucket sits on the floor.

A cluttered interior space, possibly a basement or storage room, with white brick walls and a concrete ceiling. The room is filled with various items including a blue golf bag, a red chair, a wooden table, a green container, a black suitcase, and a white plastic bag. A large, rusted metal object is visible in the foreground.

Bat Emergence Survey Results

Dusk Emergence Survey 29th July 2022

- 3.8 During the evening emergence survey no bats were recorded emerging from the structure. Generally low levels of bat activity were associated with the property and its curtilage. The activity was attributed to individual Common Pipistrelle foraging and commuting around the rear residential gardens. The first bat recorded was a Common Pipistrelle flying to the west of the property over the residential gardens at 21.59hrs approximately 22 minutes post sunset (21.37hrs: sunset). The bat was considered to be roosting within a residential property to the west.

Dusk Emergence Survey 13th July 2022

- 3.9 As per the first dusk survey no bats were recorded emerging from the structure; with low levels of bat activity recorded over the rear residential gardens. The calls were again produced by foraging and commuting Common Pipistrelle, with the first bat recorded potentially emerging from a residential property located west of site at 21.52hrs approximately 24 minutes post sunset (21.28hrs: sunset).

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 works at the No. 25 Wern Road.

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)
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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 No. 25 Wern Road conducted on the 31st May 2022 identified no evidence of roosting bats externally or internally. However, multiple potential bat roosting features were associated with the roof and as such the building was considered to be of moderate bat roosting potential. Dusk emergence surveys conducted at the structures on the 29th June & 13th July 2022 identified no bats roosting.

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 renovation works be adopted given the itinerant nature of some common bat species identified foraging and potentially roosting in close proximity to the 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 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);
- Removal of ridge & roof tiles, fascias and soffits 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.

Other considerations - birds

5.3 Additional considerations for the refurbishment works relates to the likelihood that nesting birds are potentially present within the roof structure. All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife Countryside Act 1981 and the timing of the roof works between October and February inclusive would limit potential conflict with the bird nesting season. In the event that refurbishment works were undertaken in the nesting season, a visual check of the structure would be conducted prior to site works. In the unlikely event an active nest were discovered during these works, activity would stop immediately and the project ecologist contacted.

REFERENCES

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