

MR & MRS HILL

MOOSE HALL, CASTLE STREET, NEATH

BAT ACTIVITY SURVEY - ADDENDUM REPORT

August 2022



soltysbrewster

4 Stangate House
Stanwell Road
Penarth
Vale of Glamorgan
United Kingdom
CF64 2AA

Telephone: - 029 2040 8476
E-mail:- enquiry@soltysbrewster.co.uk
Web Site: - www.soltysbrewster.com

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Issue	Revision	Stage	Date	Prepared by	Approved by	Signed
1	-	Draft For Review	25 August 2022		Dr Matthew Watts (Director)	
2	n/a	For Submission	06 June 2023		Dr Matthew Watts (Director)	

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Soltys Brewster Ecology were commissioned by the building owners (Mr & Mrs Hill) to undertake a supplementary bat emergence survey to inform proposed refurbishment works at the Moose Hall, Neath. The listed building is currently vacant and internal and external works are proposed to bring the building back into active use. A plan showing the site location is included in Appendix I. A combination of desk study and day-time inspection survey in January 2022 (SBE, 2022) established that there was no evidence of current or historical use by bats at Moose Hall although use by individual or small numbers of bats during the active season could not be precluded (i.e. **Low potential**). The external survey identified small, shallow gaps associated with the fascia and soffit in several locations (SBE, 2022) with a gap also noted around the window frame on the western elevation.
- 1.2 Under best practice guidelines (BCT 2016), structures of **Low potential** require a single emergence or re-entry survey to provide a robust appraisal of the likely presence/absence of roosting bats. To supplement the daytime inspection a single dusk emergence survey was undertaken on 21 July with a team of three surveyors positioned to observe any emergence or bat activity on the western, southern and eastern elevations. The current report provides the findings of the dusk emergence survey and provides additional recommendations with regards to bats.
- 1.3 The current report should be read in conjunction with the day-time inspection survey report (Soltys Brewster, 2022) which also contains information relating to nesting birds.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Bat survey – dusk emergence

2.1 The dusk emergence survey was undertaken on 21 July 2022 by a team of three suitably experienced ecologists including a bat licence holder.¹ The bat activity survey aimed to identify:

- if bats are present within the surveyed parts of the building and, if so, which species are present;
- the type of roost (e.g. maternity roost, day roost used by males or non-breeding females, feeding perch);
- how bats use the building and curtilage (e.g. location of roosting bats, flight paths and flight behaviour, exit and entrance points to the roost); and
- the intensity of use (e.g. likely number of bats, time and duration of use).

2.2 The dusk survey commenced 15 minutes before sunset at 21.05h and extended for 90 minutes after sunset to 22.50h. Surveys were conducted using broad-band bat detectors (Peersonic & Bat Box Duet). Bat calls were either identified in the field or using computer-based sonogram analysis software (Wavesurfer). Surveyors were positioned as described in Section 1.2 so as to allow visual coverage of the areas/features identified as of Low potential during the day-time inspection (SBE, 2022). The front cover photograph illustrates the view from the surveyor positioned on the eastern elevation with the second surveyor positioned directly opposite the frontage (southern elevation) on Castle street. The third surveyor was positioned in the walkway alongside the western elevation (north west corner) to afford a view of the fascia and windows on this elevation (Plate 1).

2.3 Weather conditions were not considered a constraint during the survey with no rain, light winds (Beaufort scale Force 1 - 2) and air temperatures 20°C at the start and 18°C at the end of the survey.

2.4 No access was possible to afford a view of the northern elevation – the Castle Gardens are locked at night – although this was not considered a significant constraint as relatively few features were associated with the roof or fascia on this elevation (SBE 2022) and surveyors positioned to the east and north west were in a position to note any bat activity associated with this area. During the course of the survey, it became evidence that the Castle itself is illuminated at night which is likely to limit the suitability of this area for bats (Plate 2).

¹ Licence S088259/1
 Mr & Mrs Hill
 Moose Hall, Castle Street, Neath
[Bat Activity Survey Report](#)
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Plate 1 Surveyor view on western elevation. Photo taken during January day-time inspection



Plate 2 Castle lighting alongside northern elevation



3.0 RESULTS

- 3.1 No bats were seen to emerge from any of the surveyed areas and levels of bat activity were generally low throughout the survey period, with 8 observations made by each of the surveyors at the southern and western elevations and 10 observations by the surveyor to the east². With the exception of a single Noctule *Nyctalus noctula* record at 21.39h (bat passing overhead noted by surveyor at southern and eastern elevations), all bat activity was attributable to Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*.
- 3.2 The first bat activity noted was for Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* at 21.35h approximately 15 minutes after sunset with an individual Pipistrelle foraging around the scattered scrub/yard area to the rear of the buildings south of Castle Street (Plate 3). Regular observations of 1 or 2 individual bats foraging in this area were made throughout the survey period by surveyors on Castle Street (i.e. positioned at southern and eastern elevations of Moose Hall). Foraging by Common Pipistrelle was also noted around a Willow tree east of the building and occasional foraging/commuting by individual bats (8 observations in total) was also associated with the walkway on the western elevation. Low levels of bat activity were noted throughout the survey period throughout the survey period although the majority of observations were in the period between 21.35h & 22.10h (16 of the 26no. total observations).

Plate 3 Rear of Buildings south of Castle Street where regular bat activity recorded



² There is likely to have been some overlap in recorded bat activity by each of the surveyors.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The combination of daytime inspection and dusk emergence survey has established the likely absence of roosting bats from Moose Hall. On this basis, no specific mitigation or licensing would be required for the works although the adoption of 'reasonable avoidance measures' would be appropriate as set out in sections 5.4 – 5.7 of the day-time report (SBE 2022).
- 4.2 As noted in Section 2.4 of the current report, no direct observation of the northern elevation of the building was possible during the dusk survey although the low levels of bat activity generally and the absence of bat observations in this area are such that this was not considered a significant constraint and no additional survey work would be required to inform the appraisal of the building. The features of Low potential associated with the building remain and no amount of survey could rule out the possibility that an individual bat may be present at a given time and the precautionary measures identified in the day-time inspection report (SBE 2022) remain applicable and are as follows:
- *Contractors briefed prior to the start of works on the low likelihood that birds or bats could be present and the action to take if a bat were discovered. In unlikely event that a bat were discovered at any point, all work will stop immediately and an ecologist contacted for advice on how to proceed;*
 - *Removal or repair of fascia or roof slates to be undertaken using hand-held tools (crowbars, claw hammers etc.). Access for these works is likely to require use of scaffold and/or a Cherry picker;*
- 4.3 The start date for the conversion and repair works is yet to be confirmed, pending planning approval and the findings of the day-time inspection and emergence survey are such that there would be no particular seasonal constraint for the works, other than timing of roofing works to coincide with dry weather.
- 4.4 Recommendations relating to nesting birds, and the provision of bird and bat boxes as part of the works are set out in the Building Inspection report (SBE 2022) and remain unchanged.

REFERENCES

Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn.)*. Bat Conservation Trust, Quadrant House, 250 Kennington Lane, London. ISBN-13 978-1-872745-96-1

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. Natural England. ISBN 1 85716 781 3

Soltys Brewster Ecology (2022). *Mr & Mrs Hill. Moose Hall, Castle Street, Neath. Building Inspection Report (Protected Species)*. Document Ref: E21106701 Doc 01 – 18 January 2022

APPENDIX I LOCATION PLAN

SITE LOCATION PLAN

AREA 2 HA

SCALE: 1:1250 on A4

CENTRE COORDINATES: 275353 , 197758



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