

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

CHIMNEY REMOVAL AT FREESIA GUESTHOUSE HUGH TOWN, ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY



Client: Mr & Mrs Green

Our reference: 2021-10-1

Planning reference: Produced in advance of submission

Report date: 28th October 2021

Author: James Faulconbridge BSc (Hons), MRes, MCIEEM

Contact: ios.ecology@gmail.com

Executive Summary

Bats – Results and Findings

The preliminary roost assessment (PRA) survey concluded that there was **negligible potential** for use by bats of the chimney, or structures directly affected by the removal of the chimney.

This assessment relates solely to the elements of the building directly affected by the proposals and does not provide a comprehensive assessment of the buildings in question. It is noted that adjacent features, not directly affected by the proposals, may provide **low potential** roosting features for individual bats. Standard avoidance measures would be required to ensure there is no disturbance or accidental damage to potential roosting features during the proposed works.

This judgement was reached in accordance with the survey methodologies and evaluation criteria outlined in the Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines¹

Bats – Further Survey Requirements

No further surveys are recommended – the PRA conclusion does not require further survey information with regards to bats in order to inform a planning application.

Bats – Recommendations

It is not recommended that any Planning Conditions are required with regards to bats in relation to the proposed chimney removal works assessed in this report.

Standard good practice and vigilance should be observed by the contractors undertaking the proposed works in acknowledgement that bats are transient in their use of roosting opportunities and may explore potential locations. This includes measures to avoid disturbance or accidental damage to adjacent features of the building. Recommendations to ensure legislative compliance are provided in Appendix 2.

Nesting Birds – Results and Findings

The survey identified one potential nesting location suitable for use by breeding birds – this is the western-most chimney pot which did not appear to be capped. No evidence of nesting was noted at the time of survey.

Nesting Birds - Recommendations

In order to ensure legislative compliance, the contractors undertaking the works must ensure that nesting birds are not disturbed in accordance with requirements under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981)². Observation of the recommendations provided in Appendix 3 will ensure this.

It is the responsibility of the contractors undertaking the works to ensure legislative compliance with regards to nesting birds – it is not recommended that Planning Conditions or other mechanisms are required to support this.

¹ Collins, J. (ed.) 2016 Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

² HMSO (1981). Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). HMSO, London.

APPENDIX 1 – PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

Planning Authority: Isles of Scilly	Location: 90301(E) 10537 (N)	Planning Application ref: Report produced in support of application
Planning application address: Freesia Guesthouse, Hugh Town, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly		
Proposed development: The proposed works were identified by the client. These involve: 1) The removal of the chimney from the building structure and subsequent restoration of the roofs and other cosmetic remediation following chimney removal.		
Building references: The chimney and roof sections in question are identified in the plans provided in Appendix 4. These include both the roof of the property in question – Freesia Guesthouse – and the adjacent property Bordeaux with which the chimney also intersects.		
Name and licence number of bat-workers carrying out survey: James Faulconbridge (2015-12724-CLS-CLS)		
Preliminary Roost Assessment date: The visual inspection was undertaken on 26 th October 2021 in accordance with relevant Best Practice methodology ³ .		
Local and Landscape Setting: The property of Freesia Guesthouse is situated centrally within Hugh Town in St Mary's in the Isles of Scilly. The land use immediately surrounding the property comprises dense residential and small-scale commercial development. The shoreline of Town Beach lies close to the north of the property. Three records of common pipistrelle roosts are identified in relatively close proximity to the property – these relate to individual bats utilising features such as hanging slates around dormer windows.		
Building Description Freesia Guesthouse is a two-storey granite-built property on the main road which runs through Hugh Town. There is a third floor built into the attic space with dormer windows on each pitch of the roof, though a roof void is retained above these upper rooms. The proposals relating to this Grade 2 listed building are restricted to the removal of a chimney. The survey therefore is focused on this element of the structure, and those adjacent elements which would be directly impacted by its removal. This survey report does not represent a		

³ Collins, J. (ed.) 2016 Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

comprehensive assessment of the property as a whole.

The chimney is situated at the western end of the property, built into the roof at the western gable. It also passes through the roof of the adjoining property (Bordeaux) which is one-storey lower in pitch.

The Chimney

The chimney itself is of brick-built construction with concrete render – this render covers all external aspects and is in good condition throughout. There are three chimney pots – two of which were capped whilst the western-most appeared to be uncapped. The chimney structure itself did not appear to provide any potential roosting opportunities for bats.

Flashing

The points at which the chimney intersects the roof of both Freesia and the adjacent property Bordeaux were lined with flashing. This was well fitted and in good condition although this has the potential to change in time and could potentially offer a low-potential roosting opportunity for individual common pipistrelle bats if the lead were to lift with winter storms for example.

Gable Wall

The gable wall of Freesia Guesthouse, above the roofline of Bordeaux, is rendered throughout and in good condition – no potential roosting features for bats were identified associated with this wall.

Roof (Freesia Guesthouse)

The roof of Freesia Guesthouse is pitched with dormer windows. The roof covering comprises concrete tiles which appear well-fitted, as are the well-pointed ridge tiles. The gable where the chimney is situated is partially hipped. The eaves are well-sealed with a soffit to one side of the chimney and a fascia on the other – both of these features are also well-sealed. Apparent gaps under the tiles adjacent to the chimney were inspected with an endoscope and found to be well sealed. An internal inspection of the roof void above the residential rooms found no evidence of bats or other species – internally this void is well sealed with clean insulation which facilitated the inspection. There appeared to be negligible potential that the area of roof around the chimney, or the internal loft space, provide suitable roosting opportunities for bats at the time of survey.

Roof (Bordeaux)

The roof of Bordeaux could not be accessed internally as this is a neighboring property under different ownership; however it was carefully inspected at height from a flat roof adjacent. The scantle slate tiles are well fitted and well pointed with no appreciable gaps or crevices. The ridge tiles are well-fitted and pointed. There is guttering running along the eaves preventing direct fly-in access at this location. There appeared to be negligible potential that the area of roof around the chimney, or the loft space, provide suitable roosting opportunities for bats at the time of survey.

Summary

Consideration was therefore given to the chimney structure itself; the two roofs it passes through; the intersection between the chimney and the roof; the gable wall against which the chimney is set; and adjacent features such as soffits and fascia boards. Any further areas impacted by the proposed removal would be internal and no potential for impacts to roosting bats are anticipated in these locations.

Adjacent Features

It is noted that other locations on the property do have potential to support roosting bats, though these were outside of the scope of this survey. These include lifted flashing beneath the window of the top floor window on the western gable; fascia boards on the north-facing eaves;

and hanging tiles on dormer windows. Standard avoidance measures would be sufficient to ensure that these locations are not affected by the proposed chimney removal.

Survey Limitations

It was not possible to inspect the loft of the roof at Bordeaux; however this is taken into account in the assessment and does not affect the conclusions which are based primarily on the lack of potential access points for bats as identified by external inspection.

It was not possible to fully access and inspect the roof space of Freesia Guesthouse due to the restricted size and obstacles such as the chimney under consideration. However the conditions internally and the lack of any evidence from a torchlit inspection conducted from inside the loft hatch allows inferences to be made regarding the overall negligible likelihood of bats being present within the interior of the void.

Assessment of Potential for use by Roosting Bats

It is considered that the chimney and the structural features directly affected by its removal provide **negligible potential** for use by roosting bats.

Adjacent structures which would not be affected could potentially support individual common pipistrelle bats though this is considered to be **low potential**.

Recommendations and Justification (Bats):

No further surveys are recommended – the conclusion of **negligible potential** does not require any further information with regards to bats in order to inform a planning application.

It is not recommended that any Planning Conditions are required with regards to bats in relation to the proposed chimney removal works.

Standard good practice and vigilance should be observed by the contractors undertaking the removal works in acknowledgement that bats are transient in their use of roosting opportunities and may explore potential locations.

The potential for individual common pipistrelle bats to make use of minor features in adjacent structural features means that works must be constrained to the area in question. This would require due care to avoid disturbance or accidental damage. Recommendations to ensure legislative compliance are provided in Appendix 2.

Assessment of Potential for use by Nesting Birds

The chimney pot to the west appeared un-capped and may potentially offer nesting habitat for breeding birds. The species which most typically uses such features in the UK is jackdaw which are not resident on Scilly; however pigeons, starlings and some gull species may occasionally use such features. No evidence of nesting was noted at the time of survey.

It is considered that the remainder of the chimney and associated structural features provide **negligible potential** for use by nesting birds.

Recommendations and Justification (Birds):

In order to ensure legislative compliance, the contractors undertaking the works must ensure that nesting birds are not disturbed in accordance with requirements under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). Observation of the recommendations provided in Appendix 3 will ensure this.

It is the responsibility of the contractors undertaking the works to ensure legislative compliance with regards to nesting birds – it is not recommended that Planning Conditions or other mechanisms are required to support this.

Signed by bat worker(s):

Date: 28th October 2021

[Redacted signature]

APPENDIX 2

-

PRECAUTIONARY METHOD STATEMENT WITH REGARDS TO BATS

The purpose of this Method Statement is to ensure that chimney removal works can proceed where presence of bats has been determined to be unlikely, but a precautionary approach is still advisable. It has been determined that direct harm to roosting bats during the proposed works would be highly unlikely.

Contractors should, however, be aware of **their own legal responsibility with respect to bats**:

Relevant Legislation regarding Bats

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, or the 'Habitat Regulations 2017', transposes European Directives into English and Welsh legislation. Under these regulations, bats are classed as a European Protected Species and it is, therefore, an offence to:

- *Deliberately kill, injure or capture bats;*
- *Deliberately damage or destroy bat roosts.*

A bat roost is commonly defined as being any structure or place that is used as a breeding site or resting place, and since it may be in use only occasionally or at specific times of year, a roost retains such a designation even if bats are not present.

Bats are also protected from disturbance under Regulation 43. Disturbance of bats includes in particular any disturbance which is likely:

(a) *To impair their ability -*

- *to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or*
- *in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or*

(b) *To affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.*

Bats also have limited protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended). It is, therefore, an offence to:

- *Intentionally or recklessly destroy, damage or obstruct any structure or place which a bat uses for shelter or protection.*
- *Intentionally or recklessly disturb bats whilst occupying any structure or place used for shelter or protection.*

Contractors should be aware of **where bats are most likely to be found in respect to the roof to be replaced**:

There is a negligible risk of bats making transient use of features beneath flashing where the chimney meets the roof, if it becomes lifted or otherwise provides a crevice feature.

The flashing around the chimney should be lifted carefully in such a way that in the highly unlikely event of a bat being present beneath, they are not crushed. Once inspected, the flashing can be removed.

Contractors should be aware of **where bats could occur in structures adjacent to the works site**.

There is low potential for individual bats to use transient roosting opportunities associated with adjacent structural features, such as the lifted flashing beneath the top-floor window in the western gable; the hanging tiles and associated features on the dormer windows; and the fascia on the northern aspect of the roof above the decking. This list is indicative but not conclusive as these structures are outside of scope of the assessment – there is no reason for them to be affected by the works proposed.

Care should be taken during works to ensure that the adjacent structural features are not disturbed or damaged. This may include a contractor briefing to ensure that those working on the roof understand the requirement, or other measures such as a temporary sign, tape or physical barrier if deemed necessary.

Contractors should be aware of **the process to follow in the highly unlikely event of finding bats** or evidence indicating that bats are likely to be present:

If bats are identified, works should cease and the named ecologist contacted immediately for advice.

If the bat is in a safe situation, or a situation which can be made safe, they should remain undisturbed.

Only if the bat is in immediate risk of harm can the bat be moved with care and using a gloved hand. This is a last resort and should only be undertaken for humane reasons if the bat is at immediate risk of harm **and** if the ecologist cannot be contacted for advice.

APPENDIX 3

-

METHOD STATEMENT WITH REGARDS TO BREEDING BIRDS

Timing of Works

The most reliable means of ensuring nesting birds are not impacted by the works is for renovation works to be conducted outside the bird breeding season of March to September inclusive. Chimney removal works can be undertaken outside of the breeding season, March to September inclusive, without constraint.

In the specific situation of the chimney removal at Freesia Guesthouse, the only location where this timing is strongly recommended is in the case of the western-most chimney pot which appeared to be uncapped.

Works Undertaken during the Breeding Season

If the chimney removal works proceed during the breeding season, a nesting bird survey would need to be carried out immediately prior to commencement. This can be achieved simply by inspecting the chimney pot from above to confirm whether or not any nesting birds are present.

- Where active nests are identified, works must be delayed until the chicks have fledged the nest.
- Once it is confirmed that nests are absent or no longer active, the works can proceed without further constraint.

APPENDIX 4

-

LOCATION PLAN AND PHOTOGRAPHS



Map 01 – Illustrating the location of the property within the local environs (red circle). Reproduced in accordance with Google’s Fair Use Policy.



Map 02 – Showing the chimney (indicated by the red dot) on the western gable end of Freesia Guesthouse (indicated in blue) with the adjacent Bordeaux property (indicated in red).



Photograph 1: Showing the chimney with the higher structure of Freesia Guesthouse to the right and the lower roof of Bordeaux to the left.



Photograph 2: An example of the tightly fitted flashing where the concrete-rendered chimney meets to the roof of Bordeaux.



Photograph 3: Showing the hipped roof on the gable end of Freesia with the chimney meeting the lower roof of Bordeaux.



Photograph 4: Showing the chimney from within the roof space of Freesia guesthouse – the brickwork is well pointed and no cavities were noted.



Photograph 5: Showing the well-fitted concrete roof tiles of Freesia abutting the chimney.



Photograph 6: Showing the well-fitted scantle slate tiled roof of Bordeaux.