PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

FORMER GLASSHOUSE AT CARRON FARM HIGHER TOWN, ST MARTIN'S, ISLES OF SCILLY

Client: *Andrew Walder*

Our reference: *22-3-3*

Planning reference: *Produced in advance of submission*

Report date: *23rd March 2022*

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Executive Summary

Bats – Results and Findings
The preliminary roost assessment (PRA) survey concluded that there was **negligible potential** for use of the former glasshouse and associated structures within the development footprint by bats. Minor features were noted which could support individual roosting bats in principle; however the degree of exposure to the elements makes occupation of these features by bats highly unlikely. The absence of evidence of current or historic occupation following a comprehensive video inspection, coupled with the aspect and environmental conditions, supports an overall assessment of negligible potential.
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
Good practice and vigilance guidelines should be observed by the contractors undertaking the works in acknowledgement that bats are transient in their use of roosting opportunities and may explore potential locations. Recommendations to ensure legislative compliance, including a pre-commencement endoscope survey, are provided in Appendix 2. It is recommended that a Planning Condition is attached to any approval Decision Notice, stipulating that the recommendations outlined in Appendix 2 of this report are followed during works. This should be a compliance condition only - it is not recommended that the Applicant should be required to submit further documentation or evidence to discharge this condition.

Nesting Birds – Results and Findings
The survey identified no evidence of nesting birds within structures which may be affected by proposed works; however there is low potential for common bird species to use some features.
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). 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. As no evidence of historic nesting was identified, no compensation measures are required.

Other Ecological Receptors
No further ecological impacts relevant to planning are identified.

APPENDIX 1 –
PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

Planning Authority:	**Location:**	**Planning Application ref:**
Isles of Scilly	SV 92850 15386	Report produced in support of application

Planning application address:

Former Glasshouse at Carron Farm, Signal Row, Higher Town St Martins Isles of Scilly. TR25 0QL

Proposed development:

The proposed works involve the reinstatement of an agricultural structure on the footprint of the former glasshouse; enabling the space at the heart of the farm to once again be utilised for productive purposes. The scope of works this would entail were identified by the Applicant onsite at the time of survey. The following description details those works identified which may impact upon potential bat roosting habitat and should accord with the documentation submitted in support of the application:

1) Re-pointing an existing external wall on the northern edge of the building footprint;
2) Demolition of existing concrete supporting walls on the southern edge of the footprint;
3) Removal of a garden shed which is currently present at the western edge of the footprint;
4) Removal of the existing glasshouse structure to the east of the footprint;
5) Reinstatement of a built structure within this footprint comprising the retained northern wall and the construction of new walls and roofs to create an agricultural building with mixed use.

Building references:

The built structures in question are identified in the plans provided in Appendix 4.

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 21st March 2022 in accordance with relevant Best Practice methodology[1].

Local and Landscape Setting:

The Application Site is situated within Higher Town – this is the eastern-most and largest settlement on the island of St Martin's in the Isles of Scilly. The town comprises a small number of detached and terraced houses along with chalets, small-scale agricultural buildings and outbuildings. There is no external street lighting within the settlement with night-time lighting arising from residential light spill eg. through windows.

The town comprises three 'arms' linked in the centre by a triangular junction. The north-

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

western portion is the most built-up whilst the southern arm comprises a single terraced row of cottages and a farmhouse known as Signal Row. The Application Site is at the south-western end of this row.

The Application Site is set in the grounds of Carron Farm, attached to the SC Dogs Distillery to the north. To the east is a contiguous landscape of small, hedgerow-bound fields with dunes, beach and associated strand-line of Par Beach beyond. To the north and west, the land slopes down towards the sea and is a mix of rough grazing pasture and small fields – there are variable levels of ongoing agricultural use with abundant self-set pittosporum in places. Immediately to the south is the peninsula of Cruthers Hill which is dominated by gorse, bracken and heather.

Four records of common pipistrelle roosts are identified in relatively close proximity to the property – these relate to individual bats in two separate day-roosts associated with a building 220m to the north-east; and both day and small-maternity roosts associated with buildings in the vineyard approximately 500m to the east.

Building Description(s):

The redline boundary of the proposed development reflects the footprint of a historic glasshouse. At present, a more modern glasshouse structure occupies the eastern end of the footprint only. The northern wall remains continuous along the entire footprint whilst the concrete southern wall is only present fully where the modern glasshouse is sited. Along the remainder of the southern boundary of the footprint, the lower wall is largely absent or significantly reduced. At the western edge of the footprint, a small garden shed is currently sited. The remainder of the footprint is either grassed or used for vegetable growing.

The main northern wall is approximately 3m high and constructed from granite blocks. The wall is predominantly well-pointed but occasional gaps do occur – whilst largely superficial, there are individual gaps which extend back into minor niches. These were comprehensively inspected with a video endoscope and no evidence of bats was identified. The level of exposure of potential roosting opportunities to the elements, especially prevailing wind and rain from the south-west, is significant and this was evident in the formation of these features which were largely clean of debris through wind-scouring.

The northern wall extends within the existing modern glasshouse which comprises the eastern portion of the footprint – here the northern wall is internal to the glasshouse structure and well-pointed throughout. The glasshouse is constructed around wooden timbers which lie between the northern wall and a lower southern wall which is approximately 1m high at the eaves. This creates a single-slope pitched roof. Internally the glasshouse is used for growing fruit and vegetable plants as well as for general storage. The roof and gables are covered with a translucent plastic material creating a light, airy interior. The nature of these panels would make any niches between the sheets and associated timbers too light to be suitable for use by roosting bats. At the apex of the single-pitched roof, there is flashing where it meets the northern wall. As with the timbers, the intersection between the flashing and the roof material would be too light to provide suitable roosting niches. There is a fascia board supporting guttering on the southern aspect of the glasshouse as well as along the roof verge on the gable – these are well-fitted but where gaps occur at the base of the boards, there is no terminal apex as they open directly into the interior of the glasshouse.

The southern wall is only intact along the boundary of the glasshouse – here there are very occasional minor gaps in the concrete which are similar in character and aspect to those associated with the exposed elements of the northern wall and subject to the same environmental exposure. They were fully inspected with a video endoscope and no evidence of bats was identified. The southern wall remains in reduced fragments along the remainder of the southern boundary of the footprint – here it offers no roosting opportunities.

The shed to the west is timber-clad with a door and window on the eastern aspect and a

window on the western aspect. These doors and windows were well-fitted, as were their frames. It is used for typical storage of garden equipment and is light internally due to the windows on two aspects – no internal voids were present. The timber cladding was tight and well-fitted throughout. The roof is a gently-sloping single-pitched structure which is formed from tin sheets with wide corrugations open on the western aspect only. The gaps created by the corrugations would be too large to provide suitable safe roosting niches for bats. In addition, the spaces beneath the corrugations are likely to be subject to significant daytime temperature variations due to the thin sheet material and lack of shading. The corrugations were fully inspected with a torch and, whilst clear of debris, this was due to the level of exposure to prevailing western winds against which there is no protection. This roof structure was therefore considered to offer negligible roosting potential for bats. The fascia boards on the northern and southern aspects were well-fitted and minor niches were too superficial to be suitable for use by roosting bats.

No evidence of bats was identified either internally or externally; all potential roosting niches were carefully inspected and characterised using a video endoscope or close-focusing binoculars.

No evidence of current or historic use by bats or nesting birds was identified during the survey.

Survey Limitations

There were no significant limitations to survey – access for inspection was comprehensive.

The survey was undertaken in mid-March, during the transitional period for bats. Static detectors operated by the author confirm that common pipistrelle (the only species known to be resident on St Martin's) were on the wing for several nights prior to the survey indicating that they will be present in transitional roosts around the island at the time of survey. Whilst evidence pertaining to potential maternity roosts would not have been in evidence at the time of survey, the assessment and conclusions of this PRA are based upon the absence of potential roosting niches rather than the absence of evidence, and therefore the seasonal timing of the survey is not considered to be a limitation to the validity of the results.

Assessment of Potential for use by Roosting Bats

It is considered that the built structures within the footprint of the Proposed Development provide **negligible potential** for use by roosting bats.

Very low potential features are identified associated with minor cavities in the external northern wall and, to a lesser extent, the southern wall as detailed in this report; additional measures around these locations form the basis of the Precautionary Method of Working outlined in Appendix 2.

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.

Good practice and vigilance which should be observed by the contractors undertaking the works in acknowledgement that bats are transient in their use of roosting opportunities and may explore potential locations. Recommendations to ensure legislative compliance, including a pre-commencement endoscope survey, are provided in Appendix 2.

It is recommended that a Planning Condition is attached to any approval Decision Notice, stipulating that the recommendations outlined in Appendix 2 of this report are followed during works. This should be a compliance condition only - it is not recommended that the Applicant should be required to submit further documentation or evidence to discharge this condition.

Assessment of Potential for use by Nesting Birds

It is considered that there is a **low risk that birds may find nesting habitat within the structures**, though no current or historic nests were identified at the time of survey.

Conditions would make any such locations suboptimal, either due to high levels of exposure or diurnal temperature fluctuation in the exterior locations; or high levels of ongoing human presence and disturbance in the glasshouse interior.

The risk is therefore identified to ensure that an appropriate precautionary approach is taken, but it is considered unlikely that nesting birds would be present in any given year.

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.

The risk of nesting birds being present is considered to be low, and 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.

There is no requirement to mitigate for loss of nesting habitat for breeding birds; however if the applicant wished to provide biodiversity enhancement measures, this could be achieved through the erection of bird boxes on the new structure, or associated with the existing property or garden.

House sparrows nest communally and nest boxes could accommodate this, either through the installation of a single purpose-built nest box comprising several individual chambers with separate entrances, or the installation of 3+ nest boxes in close proximity. Nest boxes suitable for hole-dwelling species such as blue tits, or open-fronted boxes for species such as blackbird and robin also have a high likelihood of occupation.

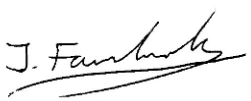
Boxes should be mounted on a wall or tree if possible, at a height of at least 3m above the ground with an entrance clear of vegetation/other features which may put them at risk of predation from cats.

Boxes can be sourced online, or can be constructed on site using methodology and specifications provided by the RSPB:

Sparrows: https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/give-nature-a-home-in-your-garden/garden-activities/createasparrowstreet/

Other Species: https://www.rspb.org.uk/fun-and-learning/for-families/family-wild-challenge/activities/build-a-birdbox/

Signed by bat worker(s): **Date:** 24rd March 2022



APPENDIX 2
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PRECAUTIONARY METHOD STATEMENT WITH REGARDS TO BATS

The purpose of this Method Statement is to ensure that development 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.*

A **precautionary pre-commencement survey** should be undertaken in the locations where bats may make opportunistic or exploratory use of niches in the existing walls.

There is a negligible risk of bats making transient or opportunistic use of minor cavities in the external northern wall and, in very isolated opportunities, the southern wall.

Both walls should be subject to an **inspection using a video endoscope** immediately prior to repointing in the case of the northern wall and demolition in the case of the southern wall. This must be undertaken by **a licenced bat worker.**

In the unlikely event that a bat is identified during this inspection, works would pause and the requirement for further actions including an EPSML would be considered. If no bats are found, the works can proceed without further constraint.

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 during the development, 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
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METHOD STATEMENT WITH REGARDS TO BREEDING BIRDS

Timing of Works

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

If a construction activities are commenced prior to the beginning of the nesting season, and this activity is sustained, then birds are likely to be dissuaded from establishing nests – in this way, works begun during the winter can proceed into the spring/summer with a minimal risk of causing disturbance or damage. However ongoing vigilance would still be required to ensure this.

Works Undertaken during the Breeding Season

If development works proceed during the breeding season, a pre-commencement nesting bird survey must be carried out by a suitably experienced person prior to works commencing. Any potential ledges, niches or other potential nesting habitat associated with the development should be carefully inspected before they are impacted. Nests are only protected if they are active (i.e. being used to rear young) or in the process of being built.

- Where active nests are identified, works affecting these must be delayed until the chicks have fledged the nest.
- Once it is confirmed that nests are absent or no longer active, the relevant features should be dismantled carefully and by hand as a precaution.

As all potential nesting locations can be visually inspected prior to the works taking place, this inspection can be carried out by the contractors undertaking the works if they are suitably confident in their experience and ability to undertake the inspection. In the unlikely event of a nest being suspected but where it cannot be confirmed, a vantage point survey should be undertaken whereby the location is watched from a distance of 20-30m to observe any nest building or provisioning behaviour. If there is no evidence of parent birds visiting the suspected site after 30 minutes, it can be concluded that there is no nest present. If such behaviour is observed, a nest should be assumed to be present and the actions outlined in the bullet points above must be followed.

APPENDIX 4
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LOCATION PLAN AND PHOTOGRAPHS

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

Map 02 – Showing the redline footprint of the Proposed Development with the existing glasshouse element in blue; the northern wall to be retained in yellow; and the shed in magenta.. The remainder of the redline interior has no built structures associated.

Photograph 1: Showing the northern wall with occasional minor niches in the rock.

Photograph 2: Showing the southern wall supporting the existing glasshouse roof. The fascia and guttering are visible.

Photograph 3: Showing the western gable of the existing glasshouse with the fascia board.

Photograph 4: Showing the interior of the existing glasshouse.

Photograph 5: Showing the eastern gable of the existing glasshouse with the translucent corrugated panels forming the majority of the structure.

Photograph 6: Showing western aspect of the shed with the wide-spaced corrugated roof visible where it is open.