

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

CONSERVATORY ON OLD POST OFFICE, BRYHER, ISLES OF SCILLY



Client: Chris West

Our reference: 23-8-1

Planning reference: Report produced in advance of submission

Report date: 10th September 2023

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

Contact: ios.ecology@gmail.com

Executive Summary

Bats – Results and Findings

The preliminary roost assessment (PRA) survey of the structures either directly or indirectly impacted by the proposals concluded that there is **negligible potential** for use by bats.

This assessment relates solely to the elements of the structure which would be affected by the current proposals - it does not provide a comprehensive assessment of the building in question.

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

Standard good practice and vigilance 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, especially if the condition of structural features were to change. A summary of standard Good Practice to be observed by contractors is provided in Appendix 1.

It is not recommended that any Planning Conditions are required with regards to bats in order to ensure legislative compliance.

If the applicant wishes to provide biodiversity enhancement, a bat box could be erected on the western gable of the dwelling. Guidance on suitable specifications is provided.

Nesting Birds – Results and Findings

There was no evidence of nesting birds recorded within the building.

Nesting Birds - Recommendations

There is no requirement to replace nesting habitat for breeding birds as no nesting habitat would be lost. If the applicant wishes to provide biodiversity enhancement, nest boxes for common bird species could be erected on the building or within the garden area.

Other Ecological Receptors

No further ecological impacts relevant to planning are identified.

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

Planning Authority: Isles of Scilly	Location: SV 87941 15133	Planning Application ref: Report produced in advance of application
Planning application address: Old Post Office, New Road, The Town, Bryher, Isles of Scilly		
Proposed development: The proposed works were identified in outline by the client - these include: 1) Removal of the existing conservatory and replacement with a new structure in the same footprint.		
Building references: The building is identified in the plans provided in Appendix 1.		
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 28 th August 2023 in accordance with relevant Best Practice methodology ¹ .		
Local and Landscape Setting: The property is set within the main settlement towards the eastern side of Bryher. It is immediately bounded by further properties to the south, east and west with a large garden set to the north. The surrounding landscape is a mixture of under-grazed grassland, scrubby and heathy habitat with windbreak hedges comprising species such as pittosporum. Scattered pockets of trees and lightly wooded areas also occur in the local environs. The closest shoreline lies to the east with the strandline of the beach likely to provide suitable foraging habitat. Two common pipistrelle roosts are formally recorded on Bryher, and a further two are anecdotally recorded within 500m of the Site. All of these roosts relate either to non-breeding summer roosts of common pipistrelle, or are not fully characterised.		
Building Description: The building is a two-storey detached dwelling. The proposals in this case are limited to the conservatory – therefore the remainder of this description will focus on this aspect of the building, and relevant adjacent features which might be indirectly affected by the proposed works. The conservatory is constructed on a low supporting wall – the wall itself is rendered and in good condition with no gaps or cavities noted. The seal between the conservatory structure and		

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

the wall is tight, with no gaps noted.

There are minor gaps behind the fascia which runs along the western pitch – however these are open at both the top and the bottom resulting in an exposed feature with no apex niche and are therefore considered to be of negligible potential for use by roosting bats. There is no fascia on the main southern aspect.

The conservatory structure itself does not offer any roosting potential, and by its nature it creates a light, airy internal space.

The join between the conservatory roof and the adjacent residential property on both the northern and eastern aspects are lined with flashing – these are predominantly well sealed but in locations where minor gaps could be seen, they were lapping glass and could therefore be inspected from the interior of the conservatory. No evidence of use by roosting bats was identified and the features are considered to be of negligible potential.

Proximate Features

The following features would not be directly affected by the proposals, but are assessed due to their proximity to the proposed working area in order to inform an appropriate working methodology.

Suitable features for use by roosting bats were identified associated with gaps behind fascias both on the main two-storey building to the north, and the gable of the single-storey building to the east.

Survey Limitations

There were no significant limitations to the survey in terms of access, comprehensiveness of inspection or seasonal timing.

Assessment of Potential for use by Roosting Bats

It is considered that the structural feature (the conservatory) to be affected by the proposals offer **negligible potential for use by roosting bats**.

The fascias on the main residential dwelling could potentially support individual common pipistrelle bats. These features would not be directly affected by the proposals but avoidance measures should be built into the construction methodology as a precaution.

Recommendations and Justification (Bats):

No further surveys are recommended – the conclusion of **negligible potential** relating to the structural elements directly impacted by the works 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 works.

Standard good practice and vigilance 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. The potential for individual common pipistrelle bats to make use of minor features associated with adjacent structural elements of the residential dwelling means that these features must not be impacted during works. This would require due care to avoid disturbance or accidental damage. Recommendations to ensure legislative compliance are provided in Appendix 2.

If the applicant wishes to provide biodiversity enhancement, the position of the western gable facing onto the boundary hedge would offer an ideal location to install a bat box. This should be positioned above 3m from the ground to minimise the risk of predation. An open-based box design would ensure that it would not require cleaning. The location and aspect would be

optimal for bats such as common pipistrelle which is the dominant species present on the island and the most likely species to use the environs for foraging and roosting. The proximity of the western gable to existing vegetation would secure a vegetated fly-in/out habitat.

A suitable box could be purchased or constructed following freely available plans. Kent Bat Box style boxes are slim easy to construct from appropriate timber using the plans provided at:

<http://www.kentbatgroup.org.uk/kent-bat-box.pdf>

Assessment of Potential for use by Nesting Birds

No evidence of nesting birds was identified associated with the property and the structure does not appear to offer suitable features for these species.

Recommendations and Justification (Nesting Birds):

There is no requirement to mitigate for loss of nesting habitat for breeding birds as no nesting habitat would be removed; however if the applicant wished to provide biodiversity enhancement measures, this could be achieved through the erection of bird boxes on the property or within the associated 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/>

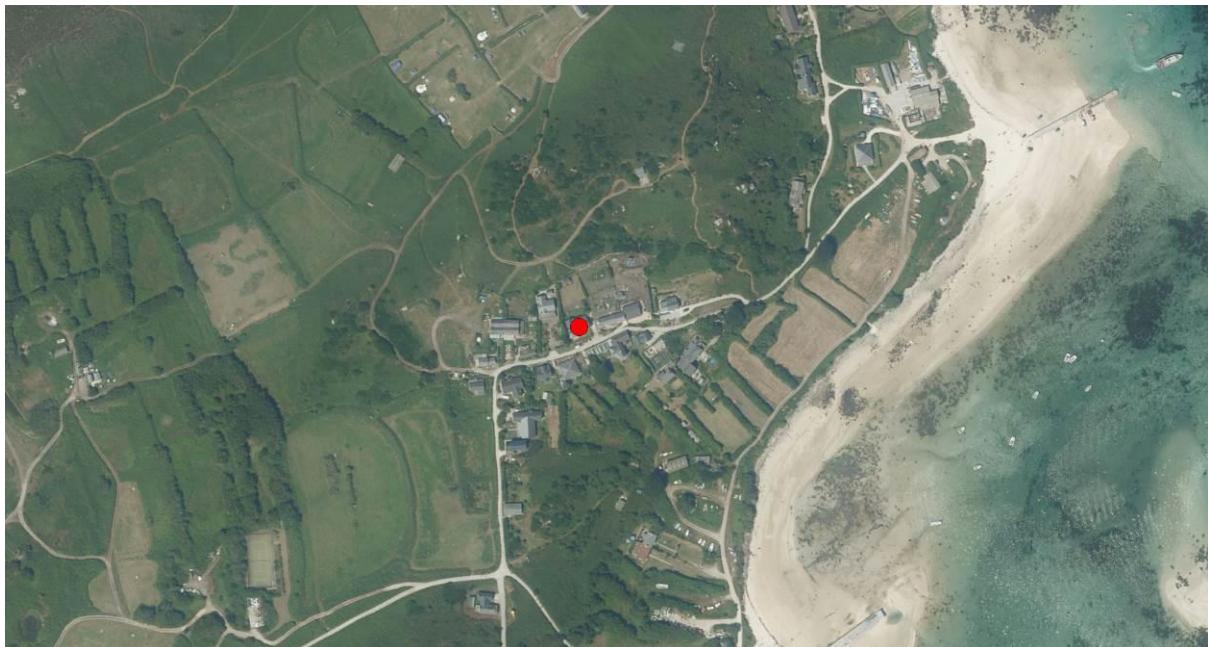
Other Species: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/fun-and-learning/for-families/family-wild-challenge/activities/build-a-birdbox/>

Signed by bat worker(s):

Date: 10th September 2023

APPENDIX 1

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 main residential property indicated with the red wash – the conservatory is shown in the blue wash.



Photograph 1: Showing the conservatory attached to the main house.



Photograph 2: Showing the roof of the conservatory – the flashing at the junction with the house can be seen with very minor gaps indicated.



Photograph 3: Showing the proximity between the fascias on the gable of the single-storey structure (indicated) and the conservatory to the left.



Photograph 4: Showing the light, airy interior of the conservatory.



Photograph 5: Showing the gaps in the adjacent fascia and flashing on the single-storey aspect of the building.

APPENDIX 2

PRECAUTIONARY METHOD STATEMENT WITH REGARDS TO BATS

The purpose of this Method Statement is to ensure that the 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 conservatory structure to be replaced:**

The conservatory to be directly impacted does not offer any opportunities for use by roosting bats. However adjacent structural features do provide low potential and these are considered below.

Construction activities including scaffolding have potential to obstruct, disturb or damage adjacent structures if not planned appropriately. Contractors should therefore be aware of **where bats could occur in structures adjacent to the works site.**

There is potential for individual bats to use transient roosting opportunities beneath fascias on both the two-storey residential dwelling on the northern aspect of the conservatory; and the single-storey structure on the eastern aspect of the conservatory.

The conservatory replacement works can approach, but must not impact upon or obstruct, these features in order for the assessment and working methodology outlined in this report to be valid.

Care should be taken during works to ensure that these structures are not disturbed, obstructed, or damaged. This involves careful design of scaffolding installation (if required) and may include a contractor briefing to ensure that those working on the project understand the requirement. Other measures such as a temporary sign, tape or physical barrier should be installed 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 or suspected, 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.