

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

GREYSTONES, ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY



Client: Clive Humphrey

Our reference: 23-11-4

Planning reference: Report produced in advance of submission

Report date: 15th December 2023

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Executive Summary

Bats - Results and Findings

The preliminary roost assessment (PRA) survey concluded that there was **negligible potential** for those aspects of the building affected by the proposals to be used by roosting bats.

This assessment takes into account the recent nature of damage to the existing roof and is therefore time-limited to winter 2023/4.

Whilst a negligible potential is concluded, it is noted that there is a small chance of opportunistic/transient use of individual discreet features which could be indirectly impacted by uncontrolled works. This potential is not sufficient to justify further surveys or significant constraints to works given the condition of the roof, but should be taken into account in accordance with the precautionary principle.

This judgement was reached in accordance with the survey methodologies and evaluation criteria outlined in the Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines 4th edition¹

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. This includes measures to avoid disturbance or accidental damage to adjacent structural features which have potential to support roosting bats.

Recommendations to ensure legislative compliance are provided in Appendix 2. The assessment and recommended method of works are valid for winter 2023/24 only.

Nesting Birds - Results and Findings

There was no evidence of nesting birds recorded within the building; however there are discreet opportunities which may be suitable for some species such as house sparrow.

Nesting Birds - Recommendations

Works should take account of the minor residual risk of species such sparrow making use of nesting opportunities during the breeding season.

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 in the courtyard garden.

¹ Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

Planning Authority: Isles of Scilly	Location: SV 90509 10582	Planning Application ref: Report produced in advance of application
Planning application address: Greystones, Well Cross, Hugh Town, St Marys		
Proposed development: The proposed works were identified in outline by the client - these are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Re-roofing the western pitch of the property.		
Building references: The property known as Greystones comprises: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A two-storey pitched roof cottage;• A wrap-around single-storey mono-pitch extension on the southern and eastern aspects; and• A single-storey flat-roof extension to the east. The only area of the property under consideration in the current assessment is the two-storey pitched-roof cottage which is identified in the plan 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 14 th December 2023 in accordance with relevant Best Practice methodology ² .		
Local and Landscape Setting: The property is a semi-detached property located on Well Cross in Hugh Town. The road runs to the north and west of the property with a small courtyard garden to the east. The property is attached on its eastern aspect. The central location of the property opposite Holgate's Green within Hugh Town means that the dominant local land use is built environment. This is predominantly residential with small-scale commercial businesses also represented. This densely built environment extends around 350m to the west and around 450m to the east. Some of these adjacent properties have associated areas of garden or green space, but the centre of Hugh Town is relatively densely developed. The closest areas of green space is Holgate's Green to the north – this is a grassed area used for amenity purposes with an array of benches and other seating. Beyond the green is the shoreline of Town Beach.		

² Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London

Other green spaces within the local environs including Parade Gardens and Porthcressa are similarly municipal in nature comprising amenity grassland and ornamental planting. The closest areas of semi-natural habitat are associated with the Garrison approximately 300m to the west; and the land around Buzza Tower approximately 200m to the south-east.

The desk study showed that no species of bat had previously been recorded roosting on the Site or associated with properties bounding the Site. A data search revealed information on five species of bat recorded on St Mary's. The species conclusively identified were common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*). Leisler's bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*) and Nathusius pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*) records were also returned though these species are believed to be itinerant or migratory individuals present during the summer period only.

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 and behind fascia boards in properties within the town.

Building Description

The property is centered around a two-storey pitched roof cottage; with a wrap-around single-storey mono-pitch extension on the southern and eastern aspects; and a single-storey flat-roof extension to the east.

The proposals under consideration are restricted to re-roofing the western pitch of the two-storey cottage. The following assessment is therefore restricted to the potential for bats to utilise the features which would be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals and does not represent a comprehensive assessment of the entire property.

The cottage is granite-built with exposed stonework. Window and door frames on the western aspect are well-fitted with no gaps noted.

The roof of the property is dry-laid slate tile which is tightly fitted for the most part; however there is a missing section on the northern end which was damaged during a storm in late October 2023. Tiles are missing below the chimney on this aspect and a temporary repair has been made with chipboard and expanding foam. This is the only location where gaps are present beneath tiles but the recent nature of the incident would preclude all but opportunistic use of the feature by bats. The ridge tiles are tightly fitted with no gaps noted. The chimneys are well sealed at the junction with the roof tiles.

There is a fascia board running along the eaves with guttering attached – there are minor gaps behind this board where the straight plane of the wood is present alongside the irregular surface of the granite. The gaps were fully inspected with a torch and close-focussing binoculars and no bats were present at the time of survey.

Drop tiles are present on the southern gable – these appear to have minor superficial gaps behind. The tiles are absent on the northern gable adjacent to the temporary repair.

Internally, the loft space is situated above the cross-beam of the A-frame timbers which support the roof. A more modern ridge and rafter structure overlies original timbers but no gaps between loft timbers were noted. The underfelting is comprehensive and in good condition, aside from the damaged section on the northern end. Access for internal inspection was limited by the small dimensions of the space, intervening timbers and the use of the loft for routine storage. However inspection from the access hatch did not identify any droppings or other signs of bats.

Survey Limitations

The underfelting within the accessible loft space would preclude direct inspection of roosting opportunities beneath the tiles, or the identification of any evidence arising from a roost in this location.

The internal dimensions of the loft and the obstructions from timbers and storage precluded a comprehensive inspection.

The presence of some features at height, including gaps beneath roof tiles or behind fascias at the roof line would preclude direct inspection and assessment.

Assessment of Potential for use by Roosting Bats

It is considered that the structural features to be directly affected by the proposals offer **negligible potential for use by roosting bats**.

This is based on the following observations and conclusions:

- The only features which may be suitable for use by roosting bats within the roof itself arose from damage which occurred in late-October. This is outside of the main active season for bats when it is unlikely that opportunistic use of a newly generated feature would occur within the short timeframe available. This assessment is time-sensitive and is considered valid for winter 2023/4.

There are features of **low potential** for use by roosting bats which could be indirectly affected by uncontrolled works – these are the fascia and drop tiles, although an inspection at the time of survey did not identify any evidence of occupation.

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 building 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.

The location of the building, coupled with the abundance of potential roosting habitat within Hugh Town, would make the likelihood of occupation of bat boxes relatively low – these are not therefore recommended.

These recommendations are valid for works undertaken during winter 2023/24 only. If works take place after May 2024, the roof should be re-assessed as the recent damage may provide roosting opportunities in time during the active season.

Assessment of Potential for use by Nesting Birds

No evidence of nesting birds was identified associated with the property; however access behind fascia boards at the eaves of the property or on the northern verge may allow species such as house sparrow to find nesting opportunities within the building.

Care should be taken to ensure that no birds are nesting prior to works taking place. This could

be achieved either through timing of works, or a pre-commencement inspection.

Recommendations and Justification (Nesting Birds):

Timing of Works

Works affecting the property should be undertaken outside of the breeding season which runs from March – September inclusive, where practicable. This would provide the most robust means of avoiding risk of impact to nesting birds.

Pre-commencement Inspection

If the recommended timing of works is not possible, then contractors should visually inspect the work area internally and externally before they are affected by the works, to confirm that no nests are present. In the unlikely event that a bird's nest is present, it must be left undisturbed until chicks have fledged the nest, at which point works can proceed.

Care must also be taken to ensure that the works do not cause disturbance or damage to proximate nesting areas through indirect impacts including vibration, noise or contractor presence. This includes adjacent parts of the building, as well as any vegetation within the courtyard garden.

Enhancement Opportunities

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 residential property within the courtyard 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.

Boxes should be mounted on a wall 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.

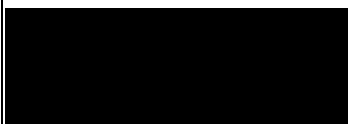
Boxes can be sourced online, or can be constructed on site using methodology and specifications provided by the RSPB:

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):

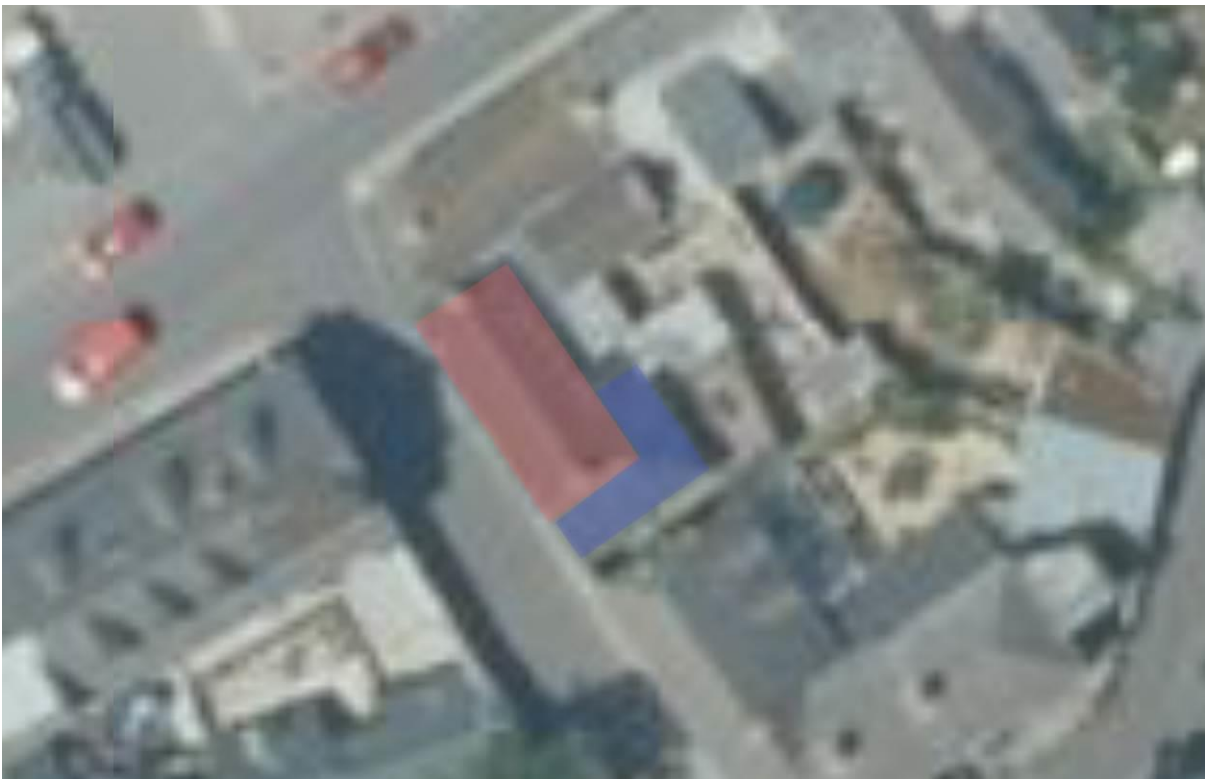
Date: 15th December 2023



APPENDIX 1
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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 distinct structural components which comprise the property and are referred to in the report. The main two-storey cottage is shown in the red wash; the wraparound single-storey mono-pitch extension is shown in the blue wash.



Photograph 1: Showing the property as viewed from the road to the west.



Photograph 2: Showing roof with the temporary repair to the damaged section below the northernmost chimney



Photograph 3: Showing the fascia board with intermittent gaps behind.



Photograph 4: Showing the northern gable with the expanding foam associated with the temporary roof repair visible above the verge.



Photograph 5: Showing the interior of the loft space

APPENDIX 2

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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 roof to be replaced:**

The tiles immediately around the area of damage are lifted or accessible in places. In the highly unlikely event of bats finding roosting opportunities associated with this feature over the winter of 2023/4, care should be taken when removing the proximate tiles.

Tiles should be lifted away carefully by hand in such a way that, in the unlikely event of a bat being present beneath, they are not crushed or injured as a result of the action. The underside of tiles should be checked before the tile is set aside.

Once the tiles have been removed carefully and it is confirmed that no bats are present, works to the roof can proceed.

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 low potential for individual bats to use roosting opportunities beneath minor gaps behind the fascia on the eaves and the drop tiles on the gable.

The roof 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 and may include a contractor briefing to ensure that those working on the roof 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, 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.