# PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

## SIGNAL ROCK STABLE BLOCK
## HIGHER TOWN, ST MARTIN'S, ISLES OF SCILLY

***Client:*** *Anna Browne*

***Our reference:*** *23-5-6*

***Planning reference:*** *Produced in advance of submission*

***Report date:*** *23rd July 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 directly impacted by the proposals concluded that there is **low potential** for use by bats. |
| **Bats – Further Survey Requirements** |
| The following recommendations are outlined in the report in order to provide a suitable baseline to inform Planning and to ensure that no Protected Species are negatively impacted as a result of the proposed works:<br>• **One further Presence/Absence Survey (PAS)** should be undertaken on the building to characterise and assess the potential use of the roof structure by bats to meet the standard of survey required by Best Practice Guidance to support a Planning Application. |

| **Nesting Birds – Results and Findings** |
| --- |
| There was no evidence of nesting birds recorded within the building; however there are opportunities which may be suitable for some species such as house sparrow associated with the eaves of the roof. |
| **Nesting Birds - Recommendations** |
| Works should take account of the potential for species such as sparrow to make use of nesting opportunities during the breeding season.<br>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 garden or on the buildings. |

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

# PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

| **Planning Authority:** | **Location:** | **Planning Application ref:** |
|---|---|---|
| Isles of Scilly | SV 92919 15493 | Report produced in support of application |

**Planning application address:**

Stable Block, Signal Rock, Higher Town, St Martin's, Isles of Scilly, TR25 0QL

**Proposed development:**

The proposed works were identified by the client. The following description should accord with the documentation submitted in support of the application:

1) Conversion of the existing stable block to staff accommodation. This would involve extensive works to replace, renovate and upgrade the building.

For the purposes of the PRA, it is assumed that all structural elements of the building could be impacted by the proposed works and therefore the assessment of the building is comprehensive. Note that the offsite attached outbuilding on the north-western aspect of the stable block was outside of client ownership and outside of the scope of the PRA.

**Building references:**

The building under consideration 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 28th May 2023 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 settlement 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 e.g. through windows.

The conurbation is structured around three roads linked in the centre by a triangular junction. The southern arm comprises a single terraced row of cottages and a farmhouse, known as Signal Row. The western arm of Higher Town comprises scattered detached houses and some terraced components running along a ridgeline with the land falling away to the south. Signal Rock lies relatively centrally within the north-western portion which is the most built-up area of the town.

The stable block is set within the garden of Signal Rock. The garden to the north-east is managed with environmental awareness and contains high quality habitat features including a pond. The land immediately surrounding the property includes further residential properties with associated gardens; and discreet pockets of shrubs and trees. Beyond Higher Town to the south-east is a contiguous landscape of small, hedgerow-bound fields with the shoreline of Par

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

Beach beyond. To the south-west is the peninsula of Cruther's Hill which is dominated by gorse, bracken and heather.

To the north-west of the property, the landscape is dominated by small, bounded fields under active cultivation for bulbs and flowers; whilst permanent pasture demarked into small fields by stone walls dominate to the north-east. The northern portion of the island which is not subject to agricultural management presents a mosaic of habitats dominated by heathland with grassland, dunes, beaches and the strandline as the coastline is reached.

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 100m to the east; and both day and small-maternity roosts associated with buildings in the vineyard approximately 340m to the south-east.

**Building Description(s):**

The stable block is a single-storey granite-built outbuilding set within the residential garden of Signal Rock. It is attached to an offsite outbuilding on its north-western aspect.

The granite block walls are in good condition and well-pointed with only occasional mortar gaps. These gaps were inspected, where they occurred, and found to be well cobwebbed with generally unsuitable internal dimensions. The entrance to the building is a single door on the north-eastern aspect – the frame is well-fitted with no gaps around the edge.

The roof is constructed of interlocking roof tiles which are in good condition – only a small number of minor gaps between tiles were noted. The ridge tiles are well pointed. Potential access to roosting features beneath the tiles was noted at the eaves – there is no guttering present and therefore there would be clear fly-in access for bats at this location.

Access to the interior would be possible via several opportunities including locations where the underfelting is torn. The interior of the building is light, due to a window in the south-eastern gable, and is used for routine storage of household and garden equipment. The roof is built around A-frame trusses with no ridge board present. The terminal timbers abutting the walls at the gable do create small gaps, but these were inspected and found to be of suboptimal dimensions and well-cobwebbed at the time of survey.

There is a fascia running along the eaves on both sides of the building – the gaps behind it are often too large to offer roosting opportunities in their own right but there are locations where the interaction between the uneven granite block and the fascia board creates crevice cavities of a suitable size to provide roosting opportunities for bats such as common pipistrelle. These gaps, where they occurred, were fully inspected with a video endoscope and found to be cobwebbed at the time of survey. They would potentially provide access to the wooden wall plate and the interior of the building.

The potential of the building for use by bats is therefore largely restricted to roosting opportunities beneath the tiles, with occasional discreet opportunities associated with gaps behind the fascia boards.

**Adjacent Features (consideration of indirect impacts)**

The building is attached to an offsite outbuilding on the north-western aspect. The partition wall is of breeze block and granite construction and there are gaps which would permit bats to move between the two buildings.

The attached outbuilding has a lower pitch than the stable block, but is otherwise similar in construction with granite blocks and well-fitted ridge and roof tiles. The structure appeared well-sealed and in good condition.

**Survey Limitations**

It was not possible to inspect the interior of the adjacent outbuilding which is attached to the stable block on the north-western aspect. This is taken into account in the assessment and recommendations.

**Assessment of Potential for use by Roosting Bats**

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

This assessment is based on the following observations and conclusions:

- There is low potential associated with occasional gaps beneath roof tiles within the main roof structure and at the eaves. Underfelting would preclude detection of any roosts in this location, as any droppings or other evidence of occupation would not be visible;
- The offsite building was not accessed for internal inspection, but could be watched as part of the PAS survey to identify any emergence activity. Whilst this building would not form part of the proposals, any roost in this adjoining outbuilding may require consideration due to indirect disturbance impacts.

This judgement was reached in accordance with the survey methodologies and evaluation criteria outlined in the Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines[2].

If roosts are present associated with the structure, uncontrolled works have the potential to destroy roosts and kill/injure bats occupying the roosts at the time of work.

**Recommendations and Justification (Bats):**

In accordance with the criteria outlined in the Best Practice Guidance, one further Presence/Absence Survey (PAS) would be required to provide an appropriate evidence-base upon which to support a planning application.

The purpose of the PAS technique is to allow the building to be watched at dusk and/or dawn to observe bats emerging from, or returning to, concealed roosting locations. This uses the predictable emergence and re-entry behaviour of bats to allow their presence to be detected in roosting locations which cannot be directly visually inspected.

The PAS survey should be led by Licenced Bat Worker(s) between May and September. The survey would require two surveyors in order to achieve a comprehensive view of the relevant features.

These surveys should be completed and submitted in support of a Planning Application in accordance with the guidance provided by Circular 06/05 (ODPM, 2005) which states that "*it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision*".

For the avoidance of doubt, the current survey baseline is not sufficient to support a Planning Application with reference to the Circular 06/05.

If no bats are identified emerging/returning to the building then the results would be incorporated into a PAS report which, submitted alongside this PRA report, would form a suitable ecological basis to support a Planning Application.

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

If bats are identified emerging from the building, further surveys would be required to fully characterise the roost and provide sufficient evidence of Protected Species to inform a Planning Application.

**Assessment of Potential for use by Nesting Birds**

No evidence of nesting birds was identified associated with the property; however access at the eaves of the pitched roof 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 (Birds):**

*Timing of Works*

Works affecting the roof should ideally 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 this is not possible, then contractors should visually inspect the work area internally and externally before they are affected by the works, in order to confirm that no nests are present. In the unlikely event that a bird 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 vegetation within the garden and boundary hedges.

*Enhancement Opportunities*

There is no requirement to mitigate for loss of nesting habitat for breeding birds as no confirmed 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 or within the garden

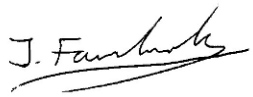
House sparrows nest communally and nest boxes could accommodate this, either through the installation of a single purpose-built nest box comprising several individual chambers with separate entrances, or the installation of 3+ nest boxes in close proximity. Nest boxes suitable for hole-dwelling species 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.

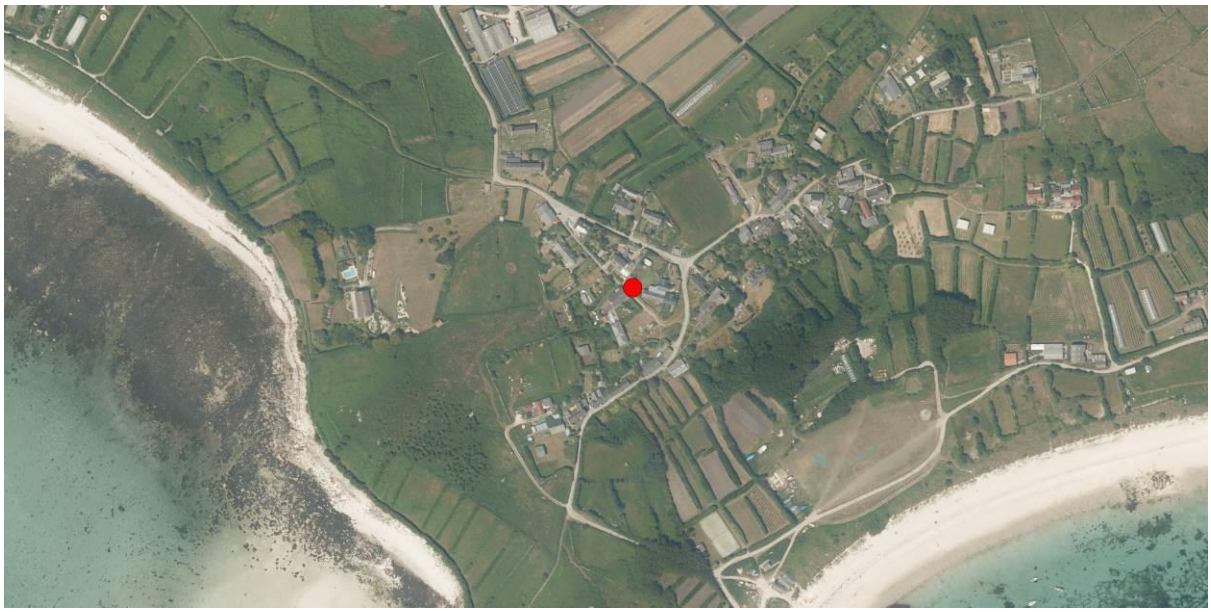
Boxes can be sourced online, or can be constructed on site using methodology and specifications provided by the RSPB:

**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:** 23rd July 2023 |

# APPENDIX 1
# -
# 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 stable block (red wash) under consideration. The offsite outbuilding attached on the north-western aspect is shown in the green wash and was not subject to survey. Signal Rock is the residential property (not indicated) to the east of the stable block.

**Photograph 1:** Showing the north-eastern aspect of the stable block

**Photograph 2:** Showing the south-western aspect of the stable block

**Photograph 3:** Showing the location where the stable block (left) adjoins the offsite outbuilding (right)

**Photograph 4:** Showing an example of gaps beneath fascia boards on the building – these were fully inspected with a torch or video endoscope.

**Photograph 5:** Showing the interior of the stable block – the terminal roof timbers can be seen abutting the granite gable wall. The underfelting is generally intact.

**Photograph 6:** Showing a gap in the underfelting where the tiles can be seen, attached directly to battens.

**Photograph 7:** Showing an example of the pointing where the door frame meets the walls – no gaps were identified.

**Photograph 8:** Showing the south-eastern gable of the stable block.