

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

TRENCH LANE, TR21 0PA (PP-12170819),
OLD TOWN, ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY



Client: Keri Lock

Our reference: 23-5-1

Planning reference: Produced in advance of submission

Report date: 1st June 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 structure either directly or indirectly impacted by the proposals concluded that there is **negligible potential** for use by bats.

Whilst a negligible potential is concluded, it is noted that there is a small chance of opportunistic/transient use of individual discreet features. This potential is not sufficient to justify further surveys or significant constraints to works, 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 Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines 3rd 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. A specific methodology is provided in Appendix 1.

A Planning Condition requiring compliance with the Precautionary Method of Works (PMW) outlined in Appendix 1 could be attached to a Decision Notice at the discretion of the LPA. If so, it is recommended that this should be compliance only – no further information would be required as the methodology outlined in the PMW is comprehensive.

The size, style and location of the building would not offer suitable locations for the installation of a bat box – no enhancement measures are therefore recommended.

Nesting Birds - Results and Findings

There is no evidence of nesting birds, though the potential for nesting birds should be considered in any building without routine human presence, as well as in surrounding vegetation.

Nesting Birds - Recommendations

There is no requirement to replace nesting habitat for breeding birds as no suitable features would be affected. The size, style and location of the building would not offer suitable locations for the installation of a bird box – no enhancement measures are therefore recommended.

Works should take account of the minor residual risk of species such blackbird, robin or wren making use of nesting opportunities during the breeding season.

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

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

Planning Authority: Isles of Scilly	Location: SV 91326 10329	Planning Application ref: Report produced in support of application
Planning application address: Trench Lane, Old Town, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, TR21 0PA (PP-12170819)		
Proposed development: The proposed works were identified by the client and should accord with the documentation submitted in support of the application. These involve: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The conversion of the interior of the building to a dog grooming salon; 2) Aesthetic external works including wood cladding and renovating/replacing corrugated roofing sheets as required. 		
Building references: The building is a single unit and is identified in the plans provided in Appendix 2.		
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 21 st May 2023 in accordance with relevant Best Practice methodology ² .		
Local and Landscape Setting: The property is situated on Trench Lane at the western edge of the residential area of Old Town on St Mary's in the Isles of Scilly. The land use immediately surrounding the property to the south and east comprises residential development with gardens; whilst a mosaic of small fields with evergreen wind breaks bound the site immediately to the north and west. The shoreline of Old Town Beach lies around 110m to the south – this is likely to provide a suitable foraging resource along the strandline. The immediate environs of the property therefore provide good quality foraging habitat for common pipistrelle as well as good connectivity to the wider landscape. The land use surrounding the settlement of Old Town to the north, east and west is dominated by agricultural land with field hedges providing connectivity within the landscape. Tree cover is sporadic with occasional shelter belts and individual trees.. Approximately 100m to the north of the building is Lower Moors SSSI – a topogenous mire with areas of elm woodland and scrub as well as a series of pools and marshy grassland. Records from the Local Bat Group indicate that this is an important foraging resource for bats on the island. Though the formally designated site begins 100m away, the higher quality habitat extends much closer to the building under consideration. A number of bat roosts are confirmed in the local environs – the most significant of these is a roost which is believed to be a maternity roost for common pipistrelles situated approximately		

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

450m to the north-east. Further roosts of unconfirmed status are situated 350m to the north-east and 200m to the east, the latter is within Old Town itself. All of these roosts relate to common pipistrelle, though one roost is also identified as also supporting soprano pipistrelle.

Building Description(s):

The property is a small, single-storey barn/shed – the lower portion is constructed from granite blocks whilst the upper walls and single-pitch roof comprise corrugated sheet attached to a timber framework. There is a single wooden door and no windows, though translucent sheets ensure that the interior is light during the daytime.

The stonework both internally and externally is well-pointed – no potential gaps or cavities suitable for use by roosting bats were noted.

Minor gaps occur where the wooden timber sits atop the stone wall – this was fully inspected and found to be dusty and cobwebbed at the time of survey indicating no recent occupation by bats.

There are minor gaps where corrugated sheets overlap, but these are generally too tightly fitted to allow access to roosting opportunities for bats.

There is no under-boarding or felting on the upper walls or roof – it is constructed of a single-skin with corrugated sheets attached to wooden battens. The size of the intersections between the corrugated sheets and the timbers are not optimal for use by roosting bats, providing no apex cavity, but it is possible that exploratory bats may make opportunistic use of features on a rare basis.

There is ivy cladding parts of the walls – the stems are insufficiently mature to offer roosting niches in their own right, and a careful inspection did not identify any concealed features.

Survey Limitations

There were no limitations on access or visibility which would affect the results of the survey.

Assessment of Potential for use by Roosting Bats

No evidence of current or historic use by bats was identified during the survey and an overall **negligible potential** was determined; however it is noted that there is a small residual risk of opportunistic/transient use of the features noted.

Recommendations and Justification (Bats):

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

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 opportunities associated with listed features should be taken into account during works. These features are:

- The minor gap between the stone wall and the timber wall plate;
- The gaps where the corrugated sheets overlap the timbers.

At the discretion of the Planning Authority, a compliance condition could be included in any Planning Application approval requiring that works proceed in line with the PMW requirements outlined in Appendix 1 of this report. This is in order to ensure that roosting bats are not impacted by the proposed works.

There is no requirement to mitigate for loss of roosting habitat for bats and due to its small height and regular disturbance through proximity to a track/pathway, the building does not offer suitable locations which would be sufficiently safe from the risk of disturbance and predation.

Assessment of Potential for use by Nesting Birds

No suitable nesting habitat for birds was identified associated with the elements of the building to be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals, though there are suitable ledges and other niches which species such as blackbird could utilise especially if there is no human presence for extended periods of time.

The ivy which clads a portion of the building, as well as adjacent vegetation, may provide nesting habitat for birds, though no evidence of active nests were noted at the time of survey.

Recommendations and Justification (Birds):

Works affecting the building 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.

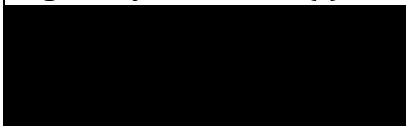
If this is not possible, then contractors should visually inspect the building and surrounding vegetation carefully in order to confirm that no nests are present. In the unlikely event that a bird nest is present, it must be left undisturbed until chicks have fledged the nest, at which point works can 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.

There is no requirement to mitigate for loss of nesting habitat for breeding birds and the building does not offer suitable locations which would be sufficiently safe from the risk of predation and disturbance.

Signed by bat worker(s):

Date: 1st June 2023



APPENDIX 1

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PRECAUTIONARY METHOD STATEMENT WITH REGARDS TO BATS

The purpose of this Method Statement is to ensure that conversion 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 existing office unit:**

Between the wall and timber wall-plate

The gap between the top of the wall and the timber wall-plate should be visually inspected with a torch prior to any works which would seal or otherwise disturb this feature. This can be comprehensively undertaken.

Once it has been confirmed that no bats are present, works to the feature can proceed.

Between corrugated sheets and wall/roof timbers

There are gaps created where the corrugated sheets overlap wall timbers. These can be inspected with a torch prior to works to remove the sheets, or enclosure of the void internally. This can be undertaken comprehensively.

Once it has been confirmed that no bats are present, works to these feature can proceed.

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 2
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LOCATION PLAN AND PHOTOGRAPHS



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



Map 02 – Showing the shed (red wash). Reproduced in accordance with Google’s Fair Use Policy.



Photograph 1: Showing the northern and western aspects of the building.



Photograph 2: Showing the typical internal structure, with the stone-block wall supporting a timber frame with corrugated sheeting attached.



Photograph 3: Showing the upper wall and roof structure.



Photograph 4: Showing the minor gap occasionally present between the top of the wall and the timber wall plate.



Photograph 5: Showing the internal wall timbers with corrugated sheets directly attached – minor gaps occur behind these.