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By Liv Rickman at 10:55 am, Mar 11, 2024

## BAT PRESENCE/ABSENCE SURVEYS (PAS)

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### PARKSIDE, ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY



*Client: NHB Architects*

*Our reference: 23-8-5*

*Planning reference: Report produced in advance of submission*

*Report date: 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023*

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# Executive Summary

<b>Overview</b>
<p>A total of two Presence/Absence Surveys (PAS) were undertaken on the property known as Parkside in Hugh Town, St Mary's. The purpose of the surveys was to provide an evidence base which meets Best Practice Guidance following the initial findings of the Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) which was completed in August 2023.</p> <p>The results of these PAS surveys are compiled in this report which should be read alongside the PRA to provide a comprehensive assessment of the building with regards to bats.</p>
<b>Results</b>
<p>The surveys did not identify any bats emerging from the property.</p> <p>The surveys generally recorded low activity levels of common pipistrelle bats in the vicinity of the site. No other bat species were recorded.</p>
<b>Conclusion</b>
<p>The survey evidence accords with the Best Practice Guidance requirements to conclude 'Probable Absence' of bats.</p> <p>No further surveys are required and there is no requirement for a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML).</p>
<b>Mitigation Strategy</b>
<p>It would be appropriate to ensure that works are undertaken with due regard for the unlikely eventuality that bats may make transient use of roosting features identified in the PRA report – these features are likely to remain suitable for use by bats despite the negative result of the PAS surveys and could be used occasionally or on an exploratory/opportunistic basis.</p> <p>A Precautionary Method of Works (PMW) is therefore provided in Appendix 1. This should be followed during works to ensure legislative compliance on the part of the contractors.</p> <p>As no bat roosts would be affected, and potential roosting features would be restored after the re-roofing works are complete, no enhancement measures with regards to bats are required.</p>
<b>Planning Recommendations</b>
<p>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.</p> <p>The PRA and PAS reports together provide an appropriate ecological baseline for the purposes of assessing the Planning Application. No further surveys would be required.</p> <p>This report provides an appropriate baseline to inform Planning and allow works to take place within the next 12 months. After September 2024, if works have not commenced, an update should be undertaken.</p>

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background to Surveys

The property known as Parkside is an end-terrace cottage located on Lower Strand in Hugh Town. The proposed schedule of works involve the re-roofing of the Cottage; demolition of the rear Extension and Garage; and construction of a new extension within the footprints of the existing Extension and Garage.

A Preliminary Roosting Assessment (PRA) was carried out in August 2023 – this assessment identified moderate potential for use by roosting bats.

The PRA report stated that further PAS surveys would be required to provide an evidence base sufficient to identify the status of the buildings with regards to bats, and inform any mitigation measures required to ensure legislative compliance. This PAS report provides the results of the recommended surveys. It should be read alongside the PRA report to provide a comprehensive assessment of the buildings with regards to roosting bats.

## 1.2. Survey Objectives

In accordance with the Best Practice Guidance<sup>1</sup>, the building was subject to two PAS surveys with two surveyors positioned to observe those locations where potential access or roosting features were identified.

The overall objective is to provide a comprehensive baseline upon which to assess the potential impact of the proposed works to roosting bats.

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

## 2. Survey Methodology

### 2.1. Surveyor Details

The surveys were led or supervised by Darren Hart. Darren has undertaken Professional Bat Licence training and is a Level 2 licenced bat worker with experience in undertaking emergence, re-entry and activity surveys.

Additional surveyors are experienced in undertaking emergence and re-entry surveys and worked under the supervision of the Licenced Bat Worker.

### 2.2. Survey Methodology

The dusk emergence surveys were conducted following Best Practice methodology for bat surveys.

The two PAS surveys were carried out on the evenings of 4<sup>th</sup> September and 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023 – scheduled over 2 weeks apart in accordance with Best Practice guidance.

The dusk emergence surveys commenced from approximately 20 minutes before sunset and continued until 90 minutes after sunset. The surveys were undertaken with regard for the appropriate weather conditions ( $\geq 10^{\circ}\text{C}$  at sunset, no/light rain or wind).

Frequency division bat detectors were used to detect and record all bat passes. The surveyors recorded metadata including the time the pass occurred, the behaviour observed (foraging/commuting) and where possible, the species of bat observed. Results from the bat detector recordings were analysed using BatSound/Analook sonogram analysis computer software.

A Thermal Image (TI) camera was used to record key aspects of the building. The footage of these was watched back by the Licenced Bat Worker to review and confirm the conclusions of the surveyors undertaking the survey.

### 2.3. Survey Validity and Update

Bats are transient in their use of habitats such as these, and apparently minor changes in condition or use of the building can affect suitability. However in the absence of significant changes in condition or building use, the nature and character of the site suggest that the PAS survey can be considered valid for a period of 12 months after the survey was completed, until September 2024.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Surveyor Positions

In order to ensure that the different elements of the building were surveyed comprehensively in line with the Best Practice Guidance, a total of two surveyor positions were identified. These are identified in Map 01 below.



**Map 01** – showing surveyor positions around the building.

### 3.2. PAS Survey 1

#### 3.2.1. Survey Conditions

The dusk survey was undertaken on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The survey commenced at 19:34, approximately 30 minutes before sunset at 20:04. It was completed at 21:34

The temperature throughout the survey was 18°C. The evening was dry and clear with no cloud cover. There was a moderate breeze, but locally the site was sheltered and calm. There was no precipitation.

### 3.2.2. Survey Results

The emergence survey did not identify any emergence activity.

The surveyor in Position S1 recorded foraging activity by common pipistrelle bats to the south and east of the property from 20:31 until around 20:42. No further activity was recorded after this time. The surveyor in Position S2 recorded the same activity from a different angle but no additional activity was recorded.

## 3.3. PAS Survey 2

### 3.3.1. Survey Conditions

The dusk survey was undertaken on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The survey commenced at 19:03, approximately 30 minutes before sunset at 19:33. It was completed at 21:03

The temperature throughout the survey was 17°C with 80% high cloud. There was a moderate breeze, but locally the site was sheltered and calm. There was no precipitation.

### 3.3.2. Survey Results

The emergence survey did not identify any emergence activity.

The timing and activity recorded was equivalent to that recorded in the initial PAS survey. The surveyor in Position S1 recorded foraging activity by common pipistrelle bats to the south and east of the property from 19:58 until around 20:15. No further activity was recorded after this time. The surveyor in Position S2 recorded the same activity from a different angle but no additional activity was recorded.

## 3.4. Summary and Evaluation

### 3.4.1. Overview

The surveys did not identify any bats emerging from the building – this is sufficient to conclude ‘Likely Absence’ in accordance with the Best Practice Guidance.

The surveys generally recorded low activity levels of common pipistrelle bats commuting and foraging in the vicinity of the site, but not associated directly with the site itself.

In each PAS, common pipistrelle bats flew from the east within 30 minutes of sunset which would indicate the potential presence of an offsite roost to the east of the property.

### 3.4.2. Requirement for Further Surveys

No further surveys are required to provide an appropriate ecological baseline in accordance with the Best Practice Guidance.

## 3.5. Limitations and Constraints

### 3.5.1. Seasonal Timing

The timing of the surveys was within the Best Practice window of late-May to mid-September and the surveys were spaced appropriately in order to ensure compliance with Best Practice.

The timing of the survey was outside of the main maternity season for bats; however the characteristics of the building and potential roosting opportunities identified are most likely to be suitable for transitional roosting by individual bats, and the timing of survey in early September would be appropriate to detect this potential use.

### 3.5.2. Survey Conditions

The weather conditions were optimal on all survey occasions with no precipitation or other adverse conditions which might be expected to affect bat behaviour.

### 3.5.3. Visibility and Coverage

The surveys were comprehensive with regards to surveyor visibility of all potential features identified in the PRA survey.



## 4. Mitigation Strategy

### 4.1. EPSML Requirement

The project does not require an European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) to proceed.

### 4.2. Precautionary Method of Works

As individual bats can be exploratory or make transient use of roosting opportunities, it is important that contractors undertaking the proposed works are aware of the low risk for bats to be encountered - works should therefore proceed with appropriate caution and vigilance.

A Precautionary Method of Works (PMW) is outlined in Appendix 1 of this document and should be followed by contractors undertaking works.

### 4.3. Timing of Works

#### 4.3.1. Bats

The results of the PRA/PAS surveys do not indicate that there is a requirement for seasonal constraints on the timing of works with regards to bats.

#### 4.3.2. Nesting Birds

Assessment of potential for nesting birds, and appropriate mitigation measures, are provided in the PRA report. These recommendations are not repeated here, for brevity.

### 4.4. Habitat Enhancement / Mitigation

#### 4.4.1. Bats

The proposals would not destroy any confirmed bat roosts, and many of the existing potential features – largely associated with fascia boards around the eaves and gable - are likely to be retained in the long term following the completion of works.

Given the location of the property, and the long term retention of roosting opportunities within the building, no further enhancement recommendations are provided.

#### 4.4.2. Nesting Birds

Recommendations relating to nesting habitat retention or creation works for breeding birds are provided in the PRA report. These recommendations are not repeated here, for brevity.

## APPENDIX 1 - PRECAUTIONARY METHOD STATEMENT WITH REGARDS TO BATS

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

The following guidance outlines measures required to ensure that contractors are suitably informed of the potential for bats to be present, and undertake works in a manner which minimises the risk of impact to bats in the unlikely event of their presence.

#### **Measures entailed by a Precautionary Method of Works**

- Contractors undertaking the works should be informed of the potential for bats to be present in the features outlined in the PRA report. This could take the form of a Toolbox Talk or site induction when contractors commence works on the site;
- Contractors should be aware of their own legal obligations with regards to bats;
- The features identified in the PRA report should be visually inspected by contractors before works, after which they should be subject to a 'soft strip' approach whereby they are removed carefully and by hand such that in the highly unlikely event of bats being present, they are not crushed and can disperse freely;
- If there is any uncertainty around the ability to remove or expose these features safely in accordance with this guidance; or any ambiguity around the features which should be included within the PMW scope, the Licenced Bat Worker should be contacted for further advice in advance of works commencing.

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 Licenced Bat Worker 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.