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PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

PARKSIDE, ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY



Client: NHB Architects

Our reference: 23-8-2

Planning reference: Report produced in advance of submission

Report date: 29th August 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 **moderate 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:

- **Two further PAS surveys** should be undertaken on the building to characterise and assess the use of the property 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 features associated with the eaves of the roof space on the Cottage.

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.

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 buildings.

Other Ecological Receptors

No further ecological impacts relevant to planning are identified.

Report Status

As the requirement for PAS surveys is identified in accordance with the Best Practice Guidance, this report **does not provide a comprehensive baseline to inform Planning** until these surveys have been completed and their results used to inform appropriate mitigation measures.

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

Planning Authority: Isles of Scilly	Location: SV 90357 10547	Planning Application ref: Report produced in advance of application
Planning application address: Parkside, Lower Strand, Hugh Town, St Marys		
Proposed development: The proposed works were identified in outline by the client - these include: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Re-roofing the roof of the Cottage;2) Demolition of the rear Extension and Garage;3) Construction of a new extension within the footprints of the existing Extension and Garage.		
Building references: The building comprises four distinct elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cottage;• Extension;• Utility;• Garage. These structural elements are 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 an end-terrace cottage located on Lower Strand in Hugh Town. The road runs to the south of the property with a small courtyard garden to the north. The property is attached on its western aspect, but is closely surrounded by further residential development to the south and east. To the south of the property lies the road, with the Parade Gardens beyond. The central location of the property 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 300m to the west and around 500m 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 location of the building		

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

is within the narrowest part of Hugh Town with Town Beach and Porthcressa lying 25m to the north and 100m to the south respectively.

The closest areas of green space are the Parade Gardens <10m to the south; and the grassed area adjacent to Porthcressa Beach lying to the south-west. Both of these areas are dominated by close-mown amenity grassland with ornamental planting, reflecting their popularity with visitors and fundamentally municipal function. The closest areas of semi-natural habitat are associated with the Garrison approximately 250m to the west; and the land around Buzza Tower approximately 250m 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 not known to be resident on the island.

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 primary structure on the property is an end-terrace granite-stone cottage (the Cottage). There is a single-pitch extension (the Extension) on the northern aspect, along with a corrugated-roof utility room (the Utility) lean-to. The property has a walled courtyard garden to the rear with a single-storey corrugated-roof garage (the Garage).

These distinct structural components will be described separately for clarity.

The Cottage

The Cottage has rendered walls on the front and rear with open granite blockwork on the gable. It is attached to the next property in the terrace to the west. All of the render and pointing is in good condition with no gaps or other opportunities for roosting bats noted. The Cottage has a pitched, dry-laid slate tile roof with ridge tiles. There are fascias running along both the eaves which are lifted in places and could provide either roosting opportunities in their own right (in the space between the flat fascia surface and the irregular stone blockwork behind) or provide access to further roosting opportunities associated with the wall plate or internal features. Gaps behind drop-tiles on the eastern gable may provide the same features.

The tiles on the Cottage are largely well-fitted and in good condition, though minor areas of lifted or broken tiles occur which may provide minor gaps which could be accessed by roosting bats. Internally, the roof is under-felted throughout – whilst this is generally in good condition, occasional tears or intentional breaks occur which could permit access to the internal loft space by bats which access beneath tiles or fascia boards. The roof is built around a timber frame – the joints are well-fitted with no gaps present. The exposed blockwork at the gables has gaps present in places, and the gap between the terminal roof timber and the adjacent wall may also provide roosting opportunities for bats. A thorough inspection of this loft space did not identify any evidence of roosting bats within the internal void – however please see Survey Limitations for further consideration of the visibility of potential evidence.

The windows on the front aspect of the property have minor gaps present at the top of the window frames where they meet the wall in places – these appear to be superficial and some have been filled in the past. The windows on the rear aspect appear well-fitted.

There are three chimneys set within the roof space of the Cottage – these are a mix of granite block and concrete-rendered – all appear to be in good condition in their own right but in some

instances, gaps beneath lifted lead flashing where the chimney joins the roof tiles would provide minor roosting opportunities.

The Extension

The single-pitch extension has a well-fitted dry-laid slate tiled roof with no gaps or other damage noted. The external construction is rendered in the same character as the Cottage. uPVC windows and frames appear well-fitted with no gaps or other features noted.

There are gaps behind the fascia board at the eaves of the Extension, as well as behind the drop-tiles on the gable. Both of these could provide either roosting opportunities in their own right or provide access to further roosting opportunities associated with the wall plate or internal features.

Internally, the loft space is partitioned into a lower void and an upper. The lower void does not offer any roosting opportunities. The upper void, accessed via a second hatch, is relatively shallow and built around a timber frame with well-fitted underfelt throughout. No evidence of bats was noted; however access was restricted by the size of the void which precluded full inspection – please see Survey Limitations for further consideration of the visibility of potential evidence.

Utility

The Utility is a lean-to with a corrugated roof which is set against the Cottage and occupies the space between the Extension and the courtyard boundary wall.

Minor gaps occur internally where the roof timbers abut the walls, and there are very minor gaps between corrugated sheets where these overlap. However the room is light, due to the well-fitted window, and in regular use as a utility space which would reduce the suitability of these features for use by roosting bats.

There are gaps behind the fascia board at the eaves of this structure which could provide roosting opportunities in their own right.

Garage

The Garage is a stand-alone structure within the courtyard garden. It is rendered externally to match the main property – this is in good condition with no gaps noted. Similarly the fascia boards along the top of the walls are well-fitted and in good condition.

The garage has a single-pitch, gently sloping roof of corrugated sheet – the edges of these could potentially permit internal access for bats but this is considered to be low potential.

The garage has well-fitted windows and doors in the courtyard aspect, with a single metal up-and-over garage door on the rear aspect facing onto the street. The windows and doors appear well-fitted with no gaps noted.

Internally, the garage is used for storage of garden and other equipment with minimal internal opportunities noted.

Survey Limitations

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

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.

The size and structure of the loft space above the Extension precluded full inspection of this location – it is estimated that the inspection covered approximately 50% of the void.

Assessment of Potential for use by Roosting Bats

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

This is based on the following observations and conclusions:

- There are multiple locations where roosting bats, or evidence of their presence, could not be adequately assessed through an inspection due to the nature of the roosting opportunities. This includes gaps behind fascias, drop tiles and lifted roof tiles as well as internalised structural features which could then be accessed such as gaps between tiles and under-felting and features associated with the wall plate. Bats could not be directly observed if present in these features, and the nature of the features would preclude droppings from being found during an inspection;
- The characteristics of the opportunities presented by the building, including the gaps behind the fascias, correspond with known confirmed roosts within Hugh Town on similar properties.

This judgement was reached in accordance with the survey methodologies and evaluation criteria outlined in the Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines².

If roosts are present associated with these structures, 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, two further Presence/Absence Surveys (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 surveys should be led by Licenced Bat Worker(s) and/or experienced surveyor(s) between May and September with at least one survey between May and August. The surveys would require two surveyors on each occasion in order to achieve a comprehensive view of the relevant features, and should be spaced at least two weeks apart.

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.

The results of these surveys would be used to inform the development of mitigation or Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS) which would be submitted in support of the Planning Application.

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

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 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, in order 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.

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 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.

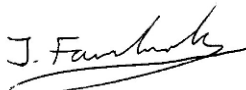
Boxes can be sourced online, or can be constructed on site using methodology and specifications provided by the RSPB:

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: 29th August 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. Please note boundaries are indicative and illustrative only.



Photograph 1: Showing the front aspect of the Cottage facing Lower Strand. There are gaps under the fascia boards where indicated.



Photograph 2: Showing the gable end of the Cottage – there are minor gaps behind drop-tiles in places as indicated.



Photograph 3: Showing the rear of the property from the adjacent access road – the main Extension is present on this aspect with the lean-to Utility room just visible adjacent to it.



Photograph 4: Showing the front of the Extension – there are gaps behind the fascia boards on this aspect where indicated.



Photograph 5: Showing the rear aspect of the Cottage – the corrugated roof of the lean-to Utility can be seen at a lower height than the main Extension roof. There are gaps behind the fascias on the Cottage here as indicated.



Photograph 6: Showing the drop-tiles on the gable of the Extension – gaps occur behind these tiles where indicated.



Photograph 7: Showing the Garage in the courtyard garden of the property.



Photograph 8: Showing the interior loft space of the main Cottage



Photograph 9: Showing the roof structure within the minor loft space of the Extension.



Photograph 10: Showing the interior of the Utility area.

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