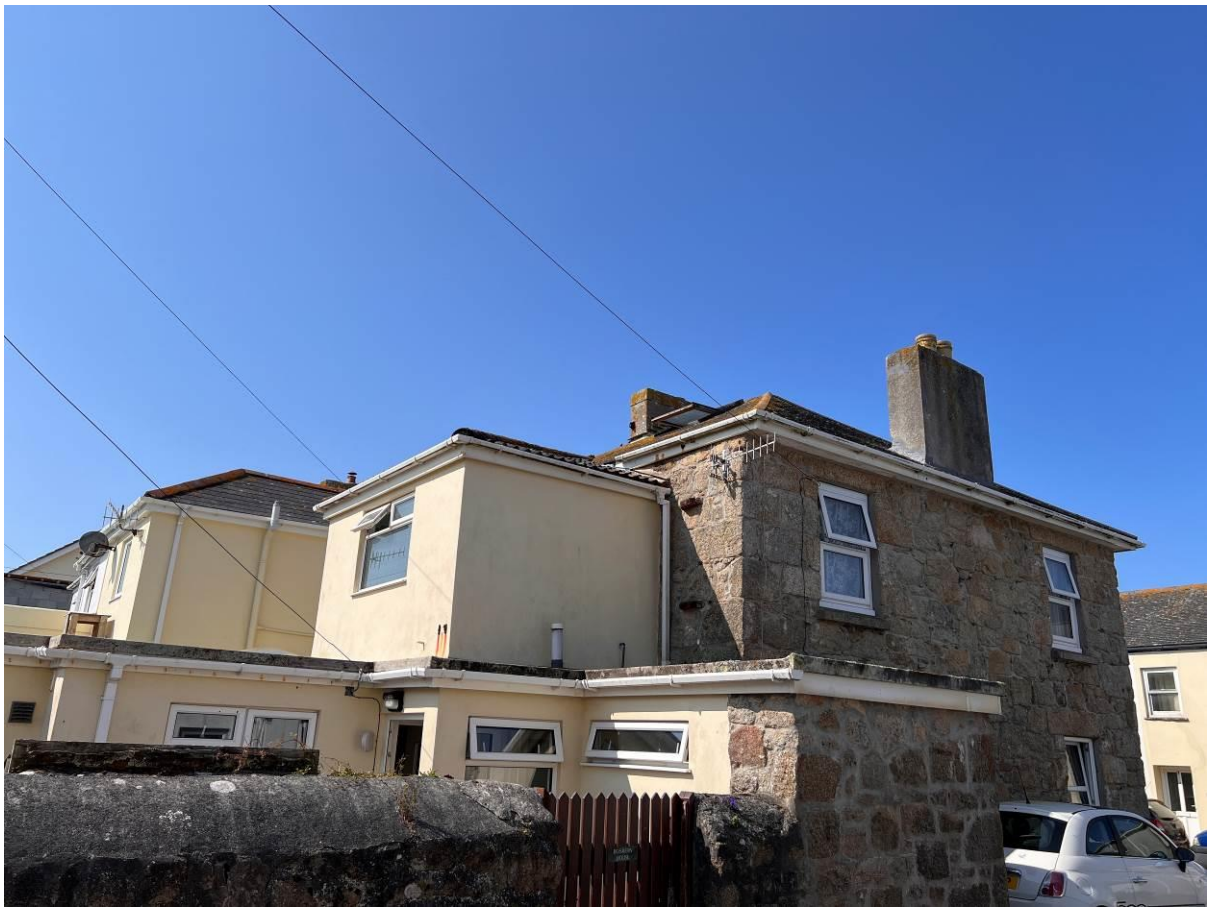
PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

1 BUZZA STREET,
ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY



Client: *Leonie Jones*

Our reference: *24-7-8*

Planning reference: *Report produced in advance of submission*

Report date: *4th August 2024*

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 property concluded that the roof pitches to be impacted by proposals have **Low Potential** for use by roosting bats.
Bats – Further Survey Requirements
The following recommendation is provided in order to ensure a suitable baseline to inform a Planning Application, ensure legislative compliance and to avoid negative impacts to Protected Species: • **One further Presence/Absence Survey (PAS)** should be undertaken to characterise and assess the potential use of the eastern and northern roof pitches of the property by bats in order to meet the standard of survey required by Best Practice Guidance to support a Planning Application.

Nesting Birds – Results and Findings
The property itself may provide suitable nesting habitat for species such as house sparrow which will commonly utilise nesting opportunities behind fascias and similar structural features within Hugh Town. Further potential nesting habitat is associated with the garden areas adjacent to the property.
Nesting Birds - Recommendations
Timing of works to avoid the breeding season is recommended as the optimal way to avoid impacts to nesting birds; alternatively pre-commencement inspections are recommended to ensure that nesting birds are not impacted by the proposed works.

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

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

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

Planning Authority:	**Location:**	**Planning Application ref:**
Isles of Scilly	90500(E) 10472 (N)	Report produced in support of application

Planning application address:

1 Buzza Street, Hugh Town, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly

Proposed development:

The proposed works were identified by the client when instructing the PRA inspection and should accord with the proposals submitted for Planning including:

1) Replacement of the wet-laid scantle tile roof on the eastern and northern pitches;
2) Removal of the existing chimney in the northern pitch.

Building references:

The roof sections to be replaced are indicated with the red wash in the aerial image below.

For context and reference, the retained section of roof is shown in green. The two-storey hipped roof extension is indicated with the blue wash and the flat-roof single-storey extension is indicated with the yellow wash.

Name and licence number of bat-workers carrying out survey:

James Faulconbridge (2015-12724-CLS-CLS)

Preliminary Roost Assessment date:

The external visual inspection was undertaken on 1st August 2024 in accordance with relevant Best Practice methodology[1].

Local and Landscape Setting:

The property is situated within the residential area of Hugh Town in St Mary's in the Isles of Scilly.

The land use immediately surrounding the property comprises dense residential development with small gardens. The shoreline of Porthcressa Beach lies close to the south of the property with the green space of the allotments, playground and setting of Buzza Tower close by to the east.

The desk study did not reveal any records of bats recorded roosting within the building historically.

Five species of bat have been 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 and are likely associated with vagrant or migratory individuals. Five 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 around dormer windows or gaps behind fascias within Hugh Town to the west.

Building Description

The property of 1 Buzza Street is an end-of terrace cottage of granite construction with a hipped, slate-tiled roof. The property has a two-storey hipped roof extension; and a single-story flat-roof extension to the north and east.

The proposals are restricted to replacement of the existing scantle tile roof on the eastern pitch and northern hipped section; and the removal of the chimney which is situated within the northern hipped section. The focus of this assessment is therefore on these features, and any adjacent structural features which might be directly or indirectly impacted by the proposals.

Eastern and Northern Roof Pitches (Direct Impacts)

The wet-laid scantle tile roof covering is generally in good condition with the majority of the pointing between the tiles remaining intact. There are a number of locations where repairs are evident internally, with expanding foam used to seal gaps where minor sections of pointing are missing. A roof light window is present in the eastern pitch – the union between the frame and the tiles appears well-fitted with no gaps or access points noted.

The tiles on the ridge and the hipped sections appear well-fitted and tightly pointed.

There is a boxed soffit running along the northern aspect – this is well-fitted and sealed with no gaps noted.

The fascia on the eastern aspect has multiple gaps which arise from the conjunction of the linear board and the irregular blockwork of the granite wall to which it is attached. This could provide potential roosting opportunities for bats in its own right, as well as permit access to the interior of the roof space as confirmed by the light visible at the eaves during the internal loft inspection.

There are two chimneys within the roof, one of which is proposed for removal. In both cases,

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

these are rendered externally with the covering in good condition. The well-sealed junctions with the main roof do not appear to offer any gaps or roosting opportunities.

Internally, the attic space is converted to residential use with no void at the apex. There are boxed storage cupboards built in at the eaves – these are insulated and well-sealed and used for routine storage. One of the access hatches provides access to the void behind these storage cupboards – this void is contiguous across the three aspects of the roof and is unfinished with scantle tiles attached directly to battens with no underfelting present. The floor is partially boarded with some insulation present between joists. Access to inspect the full extent of the unfinished void is restricted by the incursion of the boxed storage cupboards which are built into the space.

There were abundant cobwebs within this unfinished void but a number of potential roosting opportunities were noted. These are accessible to bats, as confirmed through the light visible at the eaves on the eastern aspect, though the northern aspect appeared well-sealed.

Potential internal roosting opportunities would include gaps between battens and tiles; gaps between individual tiles and pointing; and minor gaps between roof timbers at the joins. These gaps are abundant and widespread throughout the void interior, but small in size and likely to be suitable only to support individual bats.

In summary, the following potential roosting opportunities were identified associated with the pitch of the roof to be replaced:

- Internal roosting opportunities within the unfinished loft space, as noted in the report, accessible via gaps behind the fascia on the eastern aspect;
- Minor roosting opportunities between the fascia on the eastern aspect and the granite wall behind.

2 Buzza Street (Indirect Impacts)

The roof of the adjacent terrace property, where it is immediately adjacent to the roof pitch to be replaced, is also covered with wet-laid scantle tiles in a similar condition.

The proposals would have the potential to indirectly impact this roof at the intersection between the two properties on the eastern aspect. The nature of the potential roosting opportunities identified for 1 Buzza Street can be broadly assumed for the adjacent 2 Buzza Street and therefore the majority of the potential is likely to be associated with opportunities within the loft space and behind the fascia board. The presence of a dividing wall separating the two loft spaces would avoid the likelihood of any indirect impacts to potential roosting opportunities associated with voids within 2 Buzza Street; however the proposed PRA survey positions would allow this junction to be observed as a precaution.

2-Storey Extension (Indirect Impacts)

On the eastern aspect of 1 Buzza Street is a two-storey extension with a hipped pantile roof. This does not tie in directly with the main roof covering; therefore potential impacts are restricted to disturbance or obstruction during the works.

The tiles appear well-fitted and the gaps beneath the pantiles are well-pointed at the eaves and at the ridge. No potential roosting opportunities were noted associated with this structure.

Survey Limitations

The following limitations on survey were noted:

- The internal unfinished void at the eaves of the roof could not be fully inspected, though it was accessed and visually assessed where possible with regards to structure and condition;

- It was not possible to inspect at height features such as gaps behind the fascia;
- There are locations within the building where evidence of bats, if present, would not have been apparent from a PRA survey, such as roosts which might be present above the wall plate or between individual wet-laid scantle tiles.

These limitations are taken into account when concluding the assessments of building potential and are addressed by the recommendations for further surveys.

Assessment of Potential for use by Roosting Bats

The aspects of the property to be impacted by the proposals are identified as providing **Low Potential** for use by roosting bats.

This assessment acknowledges the very central position of the property within Hugh Town; the extent to which similar potential roosting features are present on a wide range of proximate properties; the quality of the potential roosting features; and the restriction of opportunities to use by individual bats rather than roosts of higher conservation significance.

Recommendations and Justification (Bats):

In accordance with the criteria outlined in the Best Practice Guidance[2], the following surveys would be required to provide an appropriate evidence-base upon which to support a planning application:

- 1x Presence/Absence Surveys (PAS) with 1x surveyor and 2x Night Vision Assistance (NVA) cameras

The purpose of the PAS technique is to allow the building to be watched at dusk to observe bats emerging from concealed roosting locations. This uses the predictable emergence behaviour of bats to allow the detection of roosting locations which cannot be directly visually inspected.

The PAS survey should be led by suitably qualified bat surveyor between mid-May and mid-September. The survey would require one surveyor in order to achieve a comprehensive view of the relevant features. A minimum of two NVA cameras would be required to cover the relevant features and allow the results of the surveys to be reviewed and confirmed in accordance with the Best Practice Guidance.

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 the survey would be used to inform the development of mitigation or Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) which would be submitted in support of the Planning Application.

Assessment of Potential for use by Nesting Birds

The property itself may provide suitable nesting habitat for species such as house sparrow which will commonly utilise nesting opportunities accessed via gaps behind fascias within Hugh Town.

No evidence of nesting birds utilising features associated with the building structure was

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

recorded at the time of survey; however access to inspect the wall plate within the internal void was restricted.

Further potential nesting opportunities are associated with the courtyard garden which may be directly or indirectly impacted by the proposed work including during erection of scaffolding and contractor presence.

Recommendations and Justification (Birds):

In order to ensure legislative compliance, the contractors undertaking the works must ensure that nesting birds are not disturbed in accordance with requirements under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

Timing of Works

The proposed works could 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.

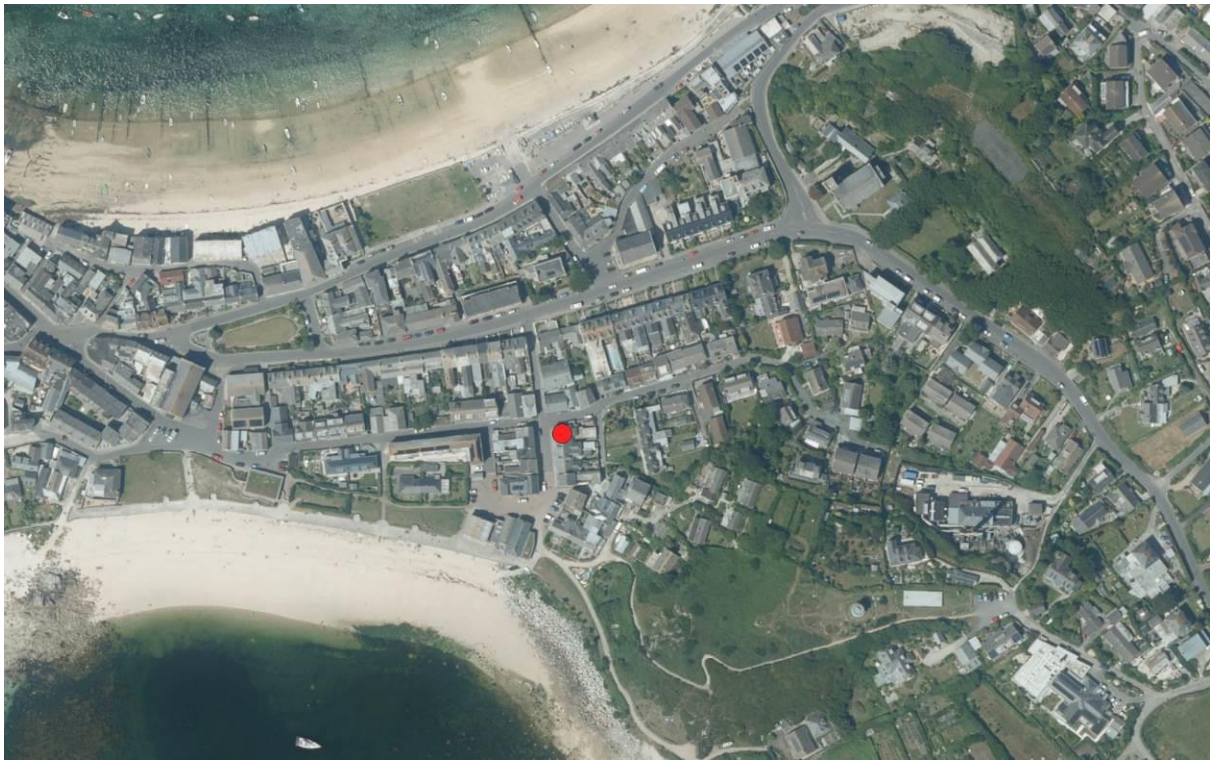
Pre-commencement Inspection

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 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 the vegetation associated with the courtyard garden areas.

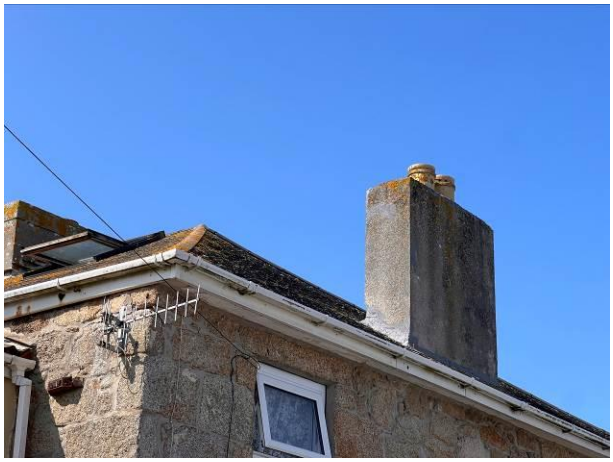
Signed by bat worker(s): [redacted] **Date:** 4th August 2024

APPENDIX 1
LOCATION PLAN AND PHOTOGRAPHS

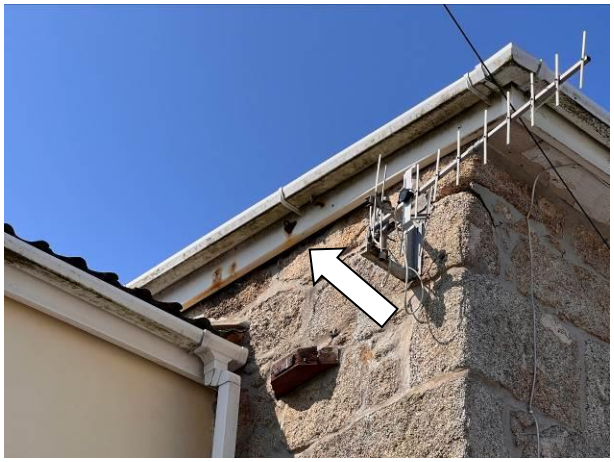


Map 01 – Illustrating the location of the property within the local environs (red circle). Reproduced in accordance with Google's Fair Use Policy.

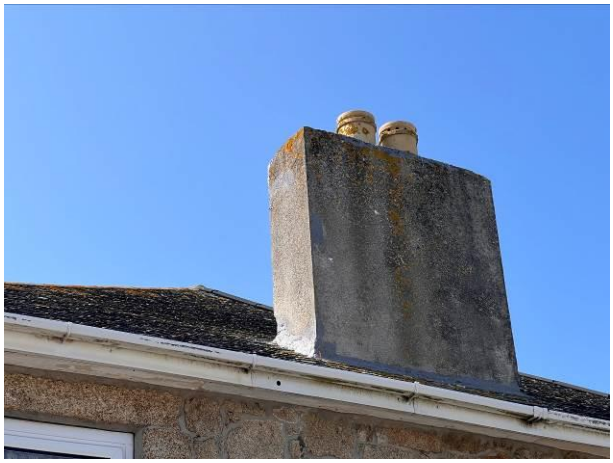
Map 02 – Showing the property within the local environs – the roof sections to be replaced is indicated with the red wash; the retained section of roof is shown in green; the two-storey hipped roof extension is indicated with the blue wash; and the flat-roof single-storey extension is indicated with the yellow wash.



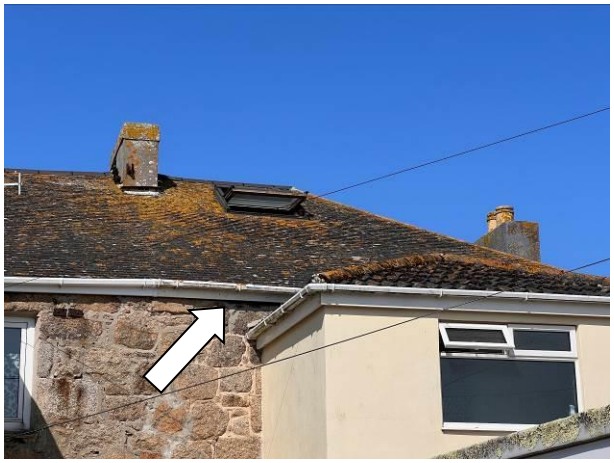
Photograph 1: Showing the northern aspect (with the chimney inset) – the tightly fitted boxed soffit is visible



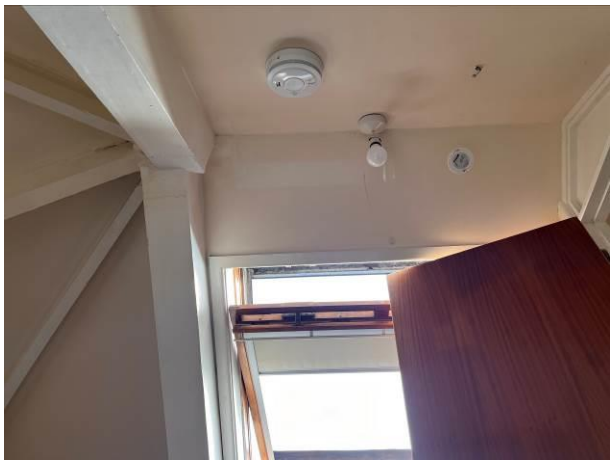
Photograph 2: Showing the gaps behind the fascia on the eastern aspect



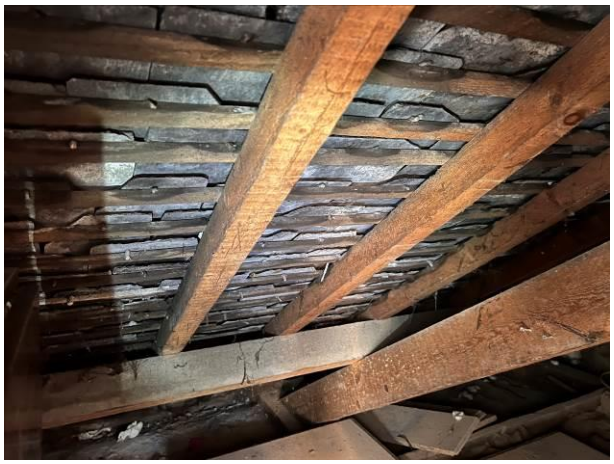
Photograph 3: Showing the rendered chimney to be removed



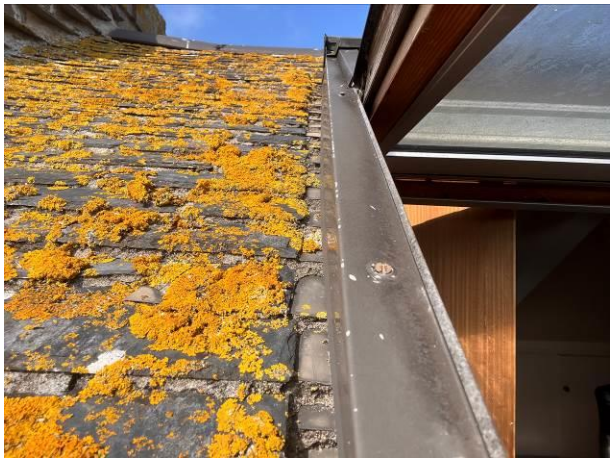
Photograph 4: Showing the gaps behind the fascia on the eastern aspect. The hipped-roof extension is visible on the RHS



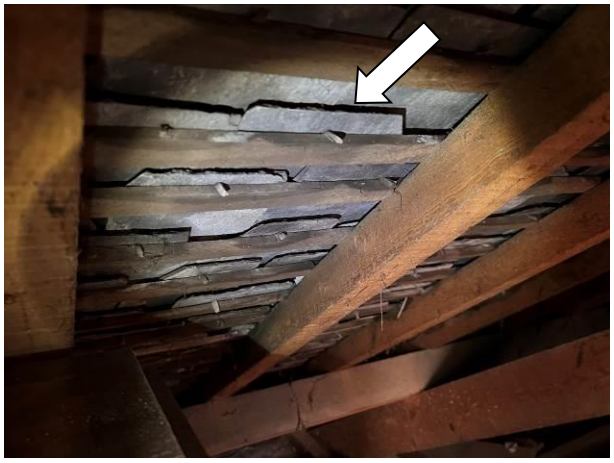
Photograph 5: Showing the top floor accommodation with no apex void



Photograph 6: Showing the interior of the unfinished portion of the eaves void – the wet-laid scantle tiles attached directly to battens are visible



Photograph 7: Showing the well-fitted junction between the rooflight window and the adjacent tiles



Photograph 8: Showing an example of the minor roosting opportunities available internally between scantle tiles