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PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

HARBOUR BUILDING, ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY



Client: Duchy of Cornwall

Our reference: 24-6-2

Planning reference: Report produced in advance of submission

Report date: 2nd July 2024

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Executive Summary

Bats – Results and Findings

The preliminary roost assessment (PRA) survey of the pitched roof of the three-storey component of the Harbour Building concluded that there is **Moderate Potential** for use by 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:

- **Two further Presence/Absence Surveys (PAS)** should be undertaken to characterise and assess the potential use of the roof structures 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

There is potential for individual bird species to find occasional nesting habitat associated with the roof of the property or adjacent structures.

No active nests were confirmed at the time of survey within the portion of the building to be directly impacted; although adjacent structures which may be subject to indirect disturbance impacts were confirmed to support nesting house sparrow.

Nesting Birds - Recommendations

Works should take account of the risk of species such as house sparrow or starling making use of nesting opportunities during the breeding season. Recommendations are provided to ensure this, including timing of works or pre-commencement inspections.

Other Ecological Receptors

No further ecological impacts relevant to planning are identified.

Report Status

As the requirement for two further 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 90200 10886	Planning Application ref: Report produced in advance of application
Planning application address: Harbour Building, The Quay, Hugh Town, St Marys		
Proposed development: <p>The proposed works were identified by the client when instructing the PRA inspection and should accord with the proposals submitted for Planning:</p> <p>1) Replacement of the roof covering on the three-storey component on the western edge of the Harbour Building (identified in this report as Harbour B);</p> <p>For clarity and brevity, this report focuses on the roof structure of the property which would be directly or indirectly impacted by the above proposals. It does not represent a comprehensive assessment of the property as a whole, much of which would not be affected by the proposals.</p>		
Building references: <p>The building comprises several distinct elements which differ in structure, situation, materials and subsequently their potential to support roosting bats.</p> <p>The element to be directly impacted is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harbour B – a three-storey element of the structure which is positioned to the western side of the building complex; <p>The following two elements directly abut Harbour B and could therefore be indirectly affected – these were included in the survey scope to ensure that the assessment is comprehensive with regards both direct and indirect impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harbour A – a two-storey element of the structure which is positioned to the eastern side of the building complex;• Harbour C – a single-storey flat-roof structure which is attached to Harbour B on the western aspect. <p>Other aspects of the building complex which are physically separate from Harbour B were not mapped or subject to further assessment but can be seen in the aerial image which underlays the building designations in the map below.</p>		



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 6th June 2024 with an additional visit to inspect the roof-well at height on 13th June 2024 in accordance with relevant Best Practice methodology¹.

Local and Landscape Setting:

The Harbour Building occupies a central position on the Quay on St Mary's. The property is surrounded on all sides by concrete and quay infrastructure including several other buildings to the west. Beyond this is the shoreline.

The directly connected terrestrial land lies to the south. Hugh Town lies to the south-east – this comprises dense residential and small-scale commercial development. The more vegetated landscape associated with the Garrison and Star Castle lie to the south-west.

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 south-east.

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

There is also a single record of a brown long-eared bat utilising a roosting feature in a pine tree in the Garrison woods to the south-west.

Building Description

Three-storey Component - Harbour B

This three-storey component of the building occupies the western side of the complex. The proposed works are restricted to the area of building identified as Harbour B in the plans provided in Appendix 1. A small portion of the two storey building otherwise defined as Harbour A is included within this description as it would be directly impacted by the proposals; is directly contiguous with the three-storey building on the southern gable; and shares the majority of potential features through a shared ridge.

The wall covering is a combination of render or construction boards. These all appear to be in good condition assuming the mesh seals between panels are in good condition throughout, including those locations which could not be visually inspected.

The roof itself is a mixture of pitched and hipped components corresponding to the layout of the building. The roof covering is a combination of natural slate and asbestos cement tiles. Metal roof lights are present in places – these generally appear well sealed in their integration into the roof covering.

Dormer windows are built into the western aspect of the building – these have pitched, tiled roofs. The apex of the valley where the dormer pitch connects with the main roof pitch is sealed with lead flashing which is lifted in places providing potential access features for roosting bats.

The majority of potential features which could be used by roosting bats are associated with the termination of the roof span on the southern, northern and western aspects. These include features at the ridge where pointing is missing beneath individual tiles; at the gable where gaps occur in the verge; or at the termination of hipped ridge runs on both the main roof span and the dormers. All of these would provide potential access features for bats or offer roosting opportunities in their own right.

A damaged soffit on the southern gable provides a further potential access or roosting feature – the remainder of the soffits appear well-fitted. Weather boarding on this gable appears to be well-fitted with no gaps or potential roosting features noted.

Internally, there are no accessible voids but there are both apex voids and at the eaves where the upper floor living space is built into the roof space. These could not be inspected due to the lack of access, but would be accessible to roosting bats through the external access features noted.

There is a roof-well in the centre with the pitches of the roof descending to a flat roof drainage area – this was accessed and inspected at height. This area of the roof is well-sealed including the roof tiles themselves and the ridge pointing. The termination of the pitch at a flat roof component excludes the potential for the majority of roosting features noted on the western aspect especially as terminal battens appear tightly fitted and comprehensively intact. Flashing in the valleys is similarly tight and well-fitted.

Two-storey Component – Harbour A

This two-storey component of the building runs north/south along the entire eastern portion of the building complex. This building would not be directly impacted by the proposed works but is included in order to assess potential roosting features which would require further survey in order to characterise potential indirect impacts. Note that the small portion of the single-storey component which would be directly affected by re-roofing works is included in Harbour B to ensure that the Harbour B element is comprehensive with regards direct impacts – see description above for details.

The roof of this building has synthetic slate tiles which would not be replaced as part of the proposed works. The majority of the ridge tiles at the junction between Harbour A and Harbour B appear to be well-pointed and any minor potential gaps in the synthetic slate tiles appear to be superficial.

The relevant aspects of this building element do not appear to offer any roosting opportunities which would potentially be impacted indirectly by the proposed works.

Single-Storey Component – Harbour C

This is a flat-roof building used as a store as part of the quay operations and is adjoined to Building B on the western aspect.

The walls are clad with vertically aligned hit and miss boarding and this provides potential roosting features behind the fascia where access to the gaps behind the alternate boards provides a feature similar to the voids created by a Kent Bat Box. This type of feature is known to support common pipistrelle roosts elsewhere on the islands.

Nesting birds are confirmed using the interior of this building with house sparrows seen carrying nesting material in through open shutter doors at the time of survey.

Survey Limitations

The following limitations on survey were noted:

- The sealed internal voids at the eaves and apex of the structure could not be accessed for inspection;
- It was not possible to inspect at height features such as gaps in the verge; ridge; soffits or lifted flashing features;
- 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 beneath tiles.

These 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 building Harbour B is identified to provide **Moderate Potential** for use by roosting bats. This is associated with a range of features directly associated with the roof structure itself.

The building Harbour A is not identified as providing any additional features aside from those which would be directly assessed through the recommended additional surveys to characterise Harbour B.

The building Harbour C which may be subject to indirect disturbance impacts through the erection of adjacent scaffolding etc. to access the Harbour B building is also considered to have Moderate Potential to support roosting bats.

The potential for roosting bats is associated primarily with the western aspect of the building – it should be noted that this aspect faces directly onto the harbour yard area which will result in light, noise and disturbance during working periods. The aspect is also very exposed to the weather given its location on the quay itself. These characteristics of the setting are considered to reduce the overall potential of the features to Moderate Potential, rather than High Potential which they would likely be in a more sheltered and undisturbed location.

Recommendations and Justification (Bats):

In accordance with the criteria outlined in the Best Practice Guidance², the following surveys would be required to provide an appropriate evidence-base upon which to support a planning application:

- 2x Presence/Absence Surveys (PAS) with 3x surveyors.

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 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) between mid-May and mid-September. The survey would require three surveyors in order to achieve a comprehensive view of the relevant features. A minimum of three Night Vision Assistance (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 building Harbour B has the potential to provide suitable nest sites for common bird species such as house sparrow or starling – use of Harbour C by house sparrow was confirmed during the survey.

No confirmed nests in Harbour B were identified at the time of survey but features associated with fascias and gaps around the eaves and soffits are frequently used by house sparrows in Hugh Town.

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

Works affecting the roof 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

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

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 adjacent parts of the building including the courtyard area.

Signed by bat worker(s):

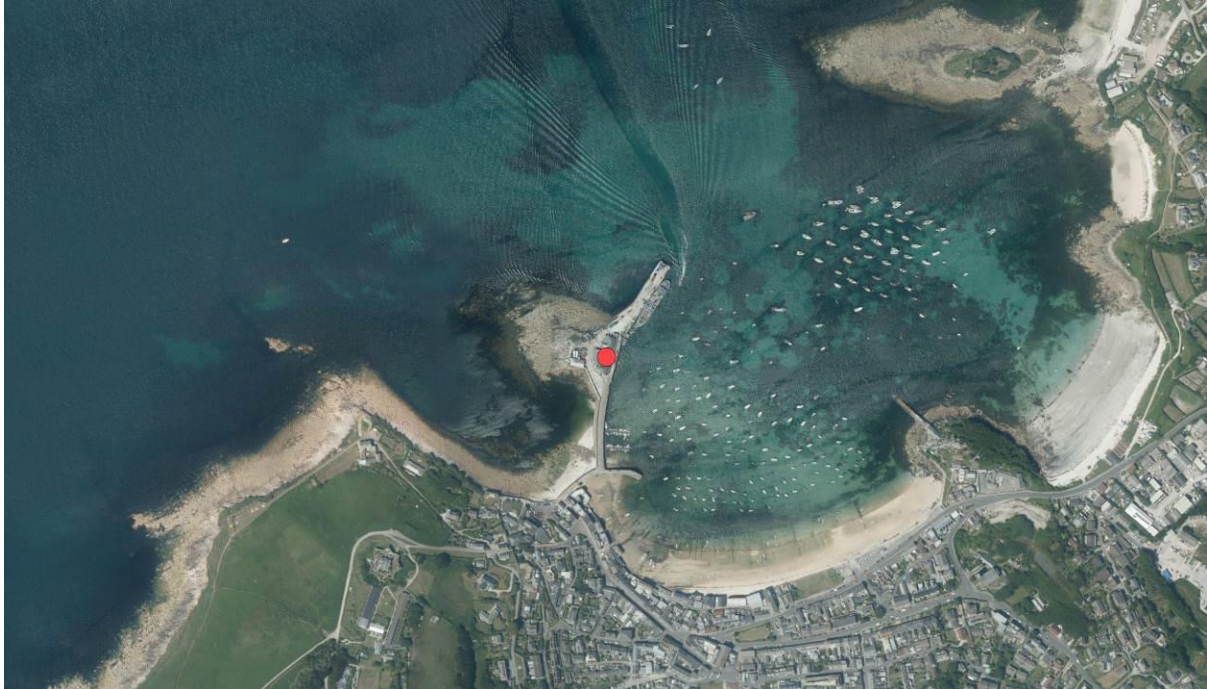
Date: 2nd July 2024

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the bat worker(s).

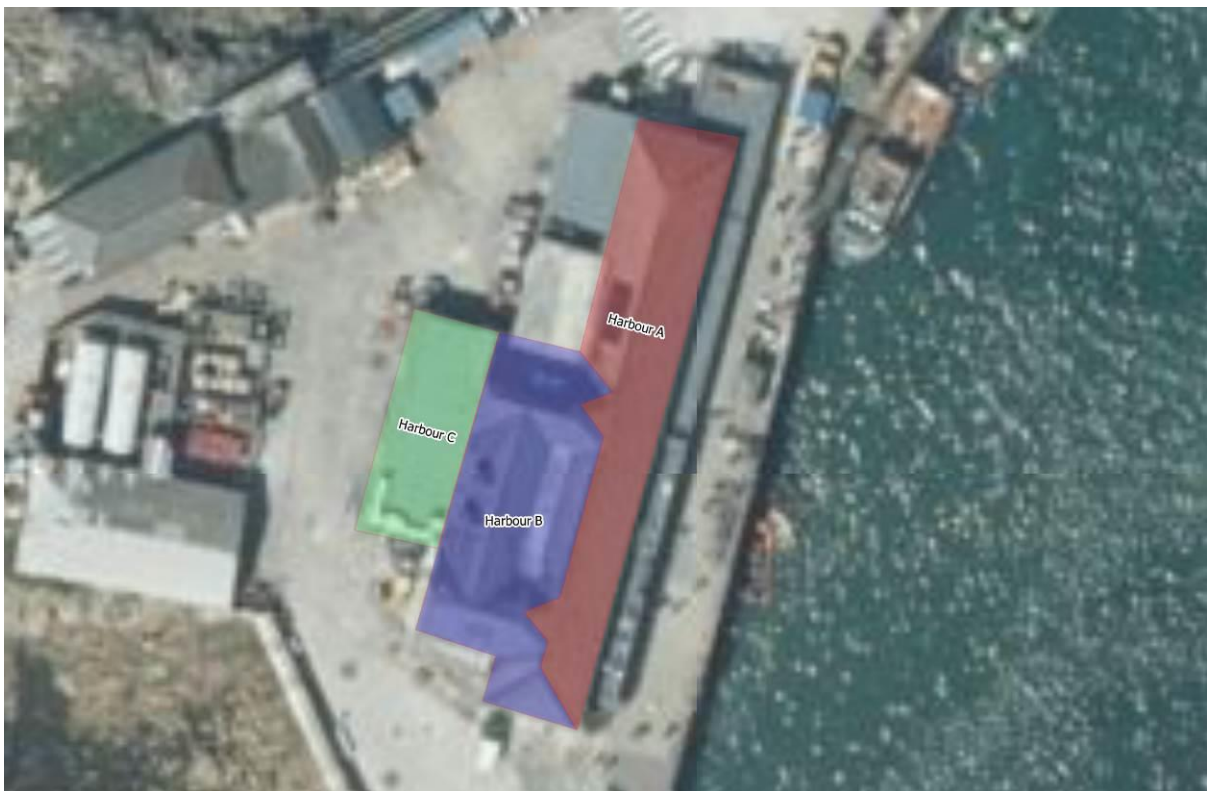
APPENDIX 1

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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 different elements of the building included within the survey scope due to either direct or potential indirect impacts arising from the proposals.



Photograph 1: Showing the northern gable of Harbour B on the LHS- the small section of the two-storey building included in the Harbour B assessment is visible on the RHS of the image.



Photograph 2: Showing an example of the partially hipped roof structure of Harbour B with occasional roof lights within the span.



Photograph 3: Showing the gaps behind the damaged soffit on the northern eaves of Harbour B.



Photograph 4: Showing the main western aspect of Harbour B - the partially hipped dormers with sealed voids above can be seen. An example of the gaps in the flashing is indicated.



Photograph 5: Showing examples of gaps in the verge (LHS) and at the base of hipped ridge (RHS) on Harbour B



Photograph 6: Showing the interior of Harbour B with sealed voids above the gable.



Photograph 7: Showing the typical roof structure within the roof-well of Harbour B – well-fitted synthetic tiles with well-fitted flashing are visible. Battens tightly fitted and present just above the termination of the tiles create a broad but superficial gap which does not have ideal dimensions nor fly-in access for use by roosting bats.



Photograph 8: Showing examples of potential roosting opportunities on Harbour C where the fascia overlaps the hit and miss boarding.