

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

PIER HOUSE, ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY



Client: Christine Mitchell

Our reference: 24-1-3

Planning reference: Report produced in advance of submission

Report date: 20th January 2024

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Contact: [REDACTED]

Executive Summary

Bats – Results and Findings

The preliminary roost assessment (PRA) survey of the roof of Pier House and The Annex concluded that there is low **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 and to avoid negative impacts to Protected Species:

- **One further Presence/Absence Survey (PAS)** should be undertaken on Pier House 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, especially under fascias or within the courtyard garden. No active nests were confirmed at the time of survey.

Nesting Birds - Recommendations

Works should take account of the risk of species such as sparrow or robin 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 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 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 90133 10699	Planning Application ref: Report produced in advance of application
Planning application address: Pier House, Hugh Street, Hugh Town, St Marys		
Proposed development: The proposed works were identified by the client when instructing the PRA inspection and should accord with the proposals submitted for Planning: 1) Replacement of the roof covering on Pier House. 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.		
Building references: The building comprises two distinct elements which differ in structure, situation, materials and subsequently their potential to support roosting bats. These two elements are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pier House – shown in the blue wash - is the direct subject of the proposals, and;• The Annex – shown in the red wash - is attached to Pier House on the south-western aspect. In order to consider the potential for indirect effects on The Annex, this roof has been included within the assessment.		



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 15th January 2024 in accordance with relevant Best Practice methodology¹.

Local and Landscape Setting:

The property comprises two holiday lets which are semi-detached – Pier House and The Annex. The property is situated at the north-western edge of Hugh Town in St Mary's in the Isles of Scilly with the harbour wall situated directly to the north.

The land use immediately surrounding the property to the south, east and west comprises dense residential and small-scale commercial development. The rocky shoreline lies immediately to the north of the property with Town Beach extending to the south-east. Beyond a band of further development, the more vegetated landscape associated with the Garrison and Star Castle lie to the west.

Four 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 under fascia boards.

Building Description

Pier House and The Annex are both of granite block construction. The blockwork is exposed on the north-western and north-eastern aspects whilst the walls facing onto the internal courtyard formed between the two buildings is rendered white.

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

Pier House

The roof of Pier House is wet-laid scantle tile – the pointing is generally in good condition but minor gaps were noted in some locations which appear superficial. There are two concrete-rendered chimneys present – these were in good condition and well-pointed.

Dormer windows are present on the north-eastern aspect – these have hanging tiles which are generally in good condition with no gaps visible, though there are gaps beneath the flashing where the dormers join the main roof which could potentially provide roosting opportunities.

The fascia on the eaves of the south-western aspect is well-sealed with no gaps noted, but there are a range of different sized crevices created by the fascia on the north-eastern aspect. The gaps are formed at the interface between the fascia board and the irregular granite blockwork and could offer roosting opportunities in their own right, or access to further opportunities associated with the roof tiles.

Drop tiles on the gables appear well fitted with only minor superficial gaps beneath one of the tiles on the north-western aspect. The verge is generally well pointed, with the exception of missing mortar just above the fascia board on the north-western gable.

Internally, the upper floor rooms are built into the roof with no void present at the apex. There are however sealed voids present at the eaves which could not be accessed for inspection.

The Annex

The Annex has a dry-laid slate tile roof which is hipped at the south-western end where it ties into the adjacent offsite property. The roof covering appears to be more recent than Pier House. The tiles are well-fitted with minimal gaps, although there is missing pointing beneath a ridge tile which could potentially provide access to roosting opportunities for bats. The roof of The Annex ties in with the roof of Pier House – here minor gaps occur in flashing which lines the valley.

The fascia on the south-eastern aspect facing the courtyard is tightly fitted and offers no roosting opportunities; however the boxed soffit on the north-western aspect has some gaps present at the intersection with the irregular blockwork of the building which could potentially provide roosting opportunities or access to locations beneath the tiles.

Internally, the upper floor rooms are built partially into the roof space with a sealed void present only above the tie-beam of the A-frame timbers. The loft could not be accessed fully but was inspected from the loft hatch. The roof appears to be well-underfelted throughout with no gaps or light visible. There is insulation between the joists. The loft space is small, and access is further restricted by pipework and services.

Courtyard Structures

Within the courtyard formed by the L-shape of the two buildings there are a small porches, an out-building and a lean-to corrugated roof section. The proposed works would not directly or indirectly impact on these structures and are not therefore given further consideration in this report.

Survey Limitations

The following limitations on survey were noted:

- The sealed voids at the eaves of Pier House could not be accessed for inspection;
- Inspection of the loft space of The Annex was restricted to the view from the access hatch due to the small size of the void and the intervening structures and services;
- It was not possible to inspect at height features such as the fascias, 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 between tiles and underfelting, or gaps between mortar in wet-laid slates.

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 following assessments of potential are identified for roosting bats:

- Pier House has **low potential** to support roosting bats;
- The Annex has **low potential** to support roosting bats; however the location and character of potential roosting features would mean these would not be disturbed or otherwise affected by works to the roof of Pier House.

The potential for roosting bats is associated primarily with the north-eastern aspect of the roof of Pier House – it should be noted that this aspect faces directly onto the Mermaid pub which will result in light, noise and disturbance during most evenings. The aspect is also very exposed to the weather given its location directly adjacent to the harbour wall to the north. These are considered to reduce the overall potential of the features to low, rather than moderate 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:

- 1x Presence/Absence Surveys (PAS) with 2x surveyors.

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) between mid-May and mid-September. The survey would require two surveyors in order to achieve a comprehensive view of the relevant features.

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 is likely to provide suitable nest sites for common bird species such as house sparrow.

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

No confirmed nests were identified during the survey, but this was outside of the bird nesting season in January 2024. Features associated with fascias and gaps around the eaves and soffits are frequently used by house sparrows in Hugh Town.

There is also potential for nesting birds to use areas within the courtyard garden which could be indirectly disturbed by contractor presence or erection of scaffolding.

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.

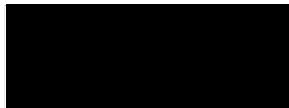
Pre-commencement Inspection

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 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: 20th January 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 building comprising Pier House shown in the blue wash; and The Annex shown in the red wash.



Photograph 1: Showing the north-eastern aspect of Pier House.



Photograph 2: Showing the dormer windows with hanging tiles on the north-eastern aspect of Pier House. Gaps beneath the fascia are indicated.



Photograph 3: Showing the gaps behind the north-eastern fascia and on the north-western verge of Pier House.



Photograph 4: Showing the south-western aspect of Pier House with the well-sealed fascia and concrete-rendered chimney visible.



Photograph 5: Showing the south-eastern gable of Pier House with well-pointed drop tiles.



Photograph 6: Showing the north-western aspect of The Annex (foreground) connected to Pier House (background).



Photograph 7: Showing the loft space in The Annex.



Photograph 8: Showing the upper floor of Pier House with the room built into the apex.



Photograph 9: Showing the interior of the upper floor room of Pier House with the boxed soffit voids visible.



Photograph 10: Showing the view from the upper dormer window on the north-eastern aspect of Pier House illustrating immediate proximity to The Mermaid and the exposed position with the harbour wall directly to the north-west.