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## PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

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BIRDS CORNER,  
OLD TOWN, ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY



*Client: Mr & Mrs D Thompson*

*Our reference: 22-12-3*

*Planning reference: Produced in advance of submission*

*Report date: 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023*

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# Executive Summary

## **Bats – Results and Findings**

The preliminary roost assessment (PRA) survey of the structures either directly or indirectly impacted by the proposals concluded that there is **negligible potential** for use by bats.

This assessment relates solely to the elements of the structure which would be affected by the current proposals - it does not provide a comprehensive assessment of the building in question.

## **Bats – Further Survey Requirements**

No further surveys are recommended – the PRA conclusion does not require further survey information with regards to bats in order to inform a planning application.

## **Bats – Recommendations**

Standard good practice and vigilance should be observed by the contractors undertaking the works in acknowledgement that bats are transient in their use of roosting opportunities and may explore potential locations, especially if the condition of structural features were to change. A summary of standard Good Practice to be observed by contractors is provided in Appendix 1.

It is not recommended that any Planning Conditions are required with regards to bats in order to ensure legislative compliance.

If the applicant wishes to provide biodiversity enhancement, a bat box could be erected on the western gable of the dwelling. Guidance on suitable specifications is provided.

## **Nesting Birds – Results and Findings**

The survey of structural features to be directly or indirectly impacted by the proposed works identified no nesting locations suitable for use by breeding birds.

## **Nesting Birds - Recommendations**

There is no requirement to replace nesting habitat for breeding birds as no suitable features would be affected.

If the applicant wishes to provide biodiversity enhancement, nest boxes could be erected either on the dwelling or within the residential garden. Guidance on suitable specifications is provided.

## **Other Ecological Receptors**

No further ecological impacts relevant to planning are identified.

## PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

<b>Planning Authority:</b> Isles of Scilly	<b>Location:</b> SV 91320 10235	<b>Planning Application ref:</b> Report produced in support of application
<b>Planning application address:</b> Birds Corner, Old Town, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly		
<b>Proposed development:</b> The proposed works were identified by the client and should accord with the documentation submitted in support of the application. These involve: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The removal of an existing conservatory to the rear of the property and;</li> <li>2) Construction of a new single-storey extension within the same approximate footprint as the removed conservatory. This would tie-in with the existing roof below the dormers.</li> </ol> <p>The following assessment takes into account both the potential direct impacts to the structure (eg. demolition or removal of structural elements) and the indirect impacts (eg. tying in the new roof pitch with the existing roof structure).</p>		
<b>Building references:</b> The building components are identified in the plans provided in Appendix 2.		
<b>Name and licence number of bat-workers carrying out survey:</b> James Faulconbridge (2015-12724-CLS-CLS)		
<b>Preliminary Roost Assessment date:</b> The visual inspection was undertaken on 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2023 in accordance with relevant Best Practice methodology <sup>1</sup> .		
<b>Local and Landscape Setting:</b> The property is situated on the western tip of the residential area of Old Town on St Mary's in the Isles of Scilly.  The land use immediately surrounding the property to the north and east comprises residential development with gardens; whilst a mosaic of small fields with evergreen wind breaks bound the site immediately to the west. The shoreline of Old Town Beach lies 20m to the south – this is likely to provide a suitable foraging resource along the strandline. The immediate environs of the property therefore provide good quality foraging habitat for common pipistrelle as well as good connectivity to the wider landscape.  The land use surrounding the settlement of Old Town to the north, east and west is dominated by agricultural land with field hedges providing connectivity within the landscape. Tree cover is sporadic with occasional shelter belts and individual trees.. Approximately 200m to the north of the building is Lower Moors SSSI – a topogenous mire with areas of elm woodland and scrub as well as a series of pools and marshy grassland. Records from the Local Bat Group indicate that this is an important foraging resource for bats on the island.  A number of bat roosts are confirmed in the local environs – the most significant of these is a		

<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.

roost which is believed to be a maternity roost for common pipistrelles situated approximately 500m to the north-east. Further roosts of unconfirmed status are situated 400m to the north-east and 200m to the east, the latter is within Old Town itself. All of these roosts relate to common pipistrelle, though one roost is also identified as also supporting soprano pipistrelle.

### **Building Description(s):**

The property is a detached, two-storey house which is rendered externally to a high standard.

The proposals are restricted to the removal of the conservatory; and the construction of a single-storey extension within approximately the same footprint. The proposals will require minor incursion to the roof of the main dwelling to tie-in the roof of the new extension – this is understood to be localized and minor in scale. The construction of the property has rooms and dormers built into the roof space; therefore only a minor discreet void below the dormers would be affected. For this reason, the survey of the main property was restricted to this section of roof and did not consider other roof sections of associated voids which would not be directly or indirectly impacted by the proposals.

This survey report does not therefore represent a comprehensive assessment of the property – rather a specific assessment of the potential direct and indirect impacts associated with the proposals under consideration.

#### *Conservatory*

The conservatory has a rendered lower wall supporting a timber structure above. The structure is in good condition with no suitable features for use by roosting bats. The interior of the conservatory is light and used as part of the residential property – no suitable roosting habitat for bats is identified internally.

Externally, there are minor gaps at the fascia running along the top of the conservatory sides, but the cavities are too small to provide access for roosting bats.

The conservatory roof attaches immediately below the uPVC boxed soffits of the main dwelling house – a very minor gap is present at the edges but this was fully inspected with a video-endoscope and did not provide suitable roosting opportunities for bats. The boxed soffits themselves were fully inspected and found to be tightly fitted with no potential access opportunities for bats.

#### *Main Dwelling – Southern Roof Pitch*

The interlocking concrete tiles are well-fitted externally with no gaps either between tiles or at the eaves, along which a guttering is located. The verge on the eaves is well-pointed with no gaps noted. The flashing where the dormer windows connect with the roof is well-fitted with no gaps. No potential access points for bats were noted in the location where the new extension roof would tie in.

The loft immediately above the conservatory is small and discreet, occupying a space below the dormer windows and terminating at this height. The void was inspected internally – this was insulated and used for routine storage. The membrane above the rafters was in good condition with no apparent gaps allowing access to the void. Small numbers of mouse droppings were noted but no evidence of bats was identified. Further loft spaces on the northern aspect of the building, and the small void above the collar beam of the roof trusses, are not physically connected.

### **Survey Limitations**

There were no limitations on access or visibility which would affect the results of the survey.

### **Assessment of Potential for use by Roosting Bats**

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

### **Recommendations and Justification (Bats):**

No further surveys are recommended – the conclusion of **negligible potential** related to the structures to be impacted does not require any further information with regards to bats in order to inform a planning application.

Standard good practice and vigilance should be observed by the contractors undertaking the works in acknowledgement that bats are transient in their use of roosting opportunities and may explore potential locations, especially if the condition of structural features were to change. A summary of standard Good Practice to be observed by contractors is provided in Appendix 1.

It is not recommended that any Planning Conditions are required with regards to bats in order to ensure legislative compliance.

If the applicant wishes to provide biodiversity enhancement, the position of the western gable facing onto open countryside on the very periphery of Old Town would offer an ideal location to install a bat box. This should be positioned below the window but above 3m from the ground to minimise the risk of predation. An open-based box design would ensure that it would not require cleaning. The location and aspect would be optimal for bats such as common pipistrelle which is the dominant species present on the island and the most likely species to use the environs for foraging and roosting. The proximity of the western gable to existing vegetation would secure a vegetated fly-in/out habitat.

A suitable box could be purchased or constructed following freely available plans. Kent Bat Box style boxes are slim easy to construct from appropriate timber using the plans provided at:

<http://www.kentbatgroup.org.uk/kent-bat-box.pdf>

### **Assessment of Potential for use by Nesting Birds**

No suitable nesting habitat for birds was identified associated with the elements of the building to be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. No vegetation capable of supporting nesting birds was identified associated with the immediate works area, though care should be taken to avoid incidental impacts to potential nesting habitat within the boundary hedge or wider garden area.

### **Recommendations and Justification (Birds):**

There is no requirement to mitigate for loss of nesting habitat for breeding birds; however if the applicant wished to provide biodiversity enhancement measures, this could be achieved through the erection of bird boxes on the residential property or within the garden.

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 or tree 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/createsparrowstreet/>

**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:** 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023

# APPENDIX 1

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## BEST PRACTISE WITH REGARDS TO BATS

The purpose of this Method Statement is to ensure that contractors undertaking renovation works are aware of their legal duties with regards to bats, and aware of the appropriate action to be taken in the highly unlikely event of bats being encountered.

Contractors should 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.*

Contractors should be aware of **where bats are most likely to be found in respect to the structure:**

No features suitable for roosting bats were identified within the proposed works area – however contractors should be aware of the type of feature in which bats might be found in this type of structure.

These include:

- Gaps between roofing tiles;
- Crevices and gaps between structural elements, such as the conservatory roof and the uPVC soffits;
- Beneath lead flashing, if this becomes lifted to create a cavity;
- Within loft voids, often at the apex of roof timbers;
- In gaps between fascias/soffits and the adjacent wall.

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, works should cease and the named ecologist 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.



## APPENDIX 2

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## LOCATION PLAN AND PHOTOGRAPHS



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



**Map 02** – Showing the main dwelling house (blue wash) with the conservatory to the south (red wash). Reproduced in accordance with Google’s Fair Use Policy.



**Photograph 1:** Showing the property viewed from the south including the conservatory to be demolished.



**Photograph 2:** Showing the union between the conservatory (left) and the main dwelling with the well-fitted uPVC boxed soffits visible.



**Photograph 3:** Showing the gaps in the fascia above the conservatory windows – these gaps are too tight and superficial to allow access by roosting bats.



**Photograph 4:** Showing the pitch of the roof where the new extension roof will tie in – the interlocking concrete tiles are well fitted and in excellent condition.



**Photograph 5:** Showing the interior of the eaves loft space where the new roof of the extension will tie in.