PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

BISHOPS VIEW,
ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY

Client: *Mark Wright*

Our reference: *23-7-1*

Planning reference: *Produced in advance of submission*

Report date: *11th July 2023*

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Executive Summary

Bats – Results and Findings
The preliminary roost assessment (PRA) survey of the structures directly impacted by the proposals concluded that there is **low 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: • **One further Presence/Absence Survey (PAS)** should be undertaken on the building to characterise and assess the potential use of the roof structures 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 the eaves of the garage roof.
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 in the garden or 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:	**Location:**	**Planning Application ref:**
Isles of Scilly	SV 91192 11733	Report produced in support of application

Planning application address:

Bishops View, Porthloo Lane, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly

Proposed development:

The proposed works were identified by the client and should accord with the documentation submitted in support of the application. These involve:

1) The re-roofing of the property.

The following assessment takes into account both the potential direct impacts to the structure (e.g. removal of the existing roof) and the indirect impacts (e.g. disturbance to offsite features which may support roosting bats).

Building references:

The building is 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 7th July 2023 in accordance with relevant Best Practice methodology[1].

Local and Landscape Setting:

The property is situated towards the north-western portion of the island of St Mary's, between Porthloo and Telegraph. It is a detached bungalow separated from other immediately proximate development. The bungalow is set within a garden including a lawn, a pond and flower beds with boundary hedgerows.

The land to the north and north-west is occupied by St Mary's Golf Club. This area is dominated by grassland, with minor areas of scrub and trees though the character of this golf course is less intensively manicured than many which can be found on the mainland, resulting in the provision of a higher quality of habitat for species including bats.

The remaining landscape surrounding the property is a series of agricultural fields under various management including flower growing, pasture and arable as well as disused land which is not under active cultivation. These are frequently separated by typical windbreak species hedgerows providing good connectivity through the landscape.

There is a pine shelter belt running immediately to the north of the bungalow on the boundary of the property, which continues both north-west and south-east – this represents a relatively unusual stand of mature trees within the local environs though it is not strongly connected with other wooded habitat.

There are no bat roosts recorded within 500m of the site – the closest roost record relates to a

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

common pipistrelle roost just over 500m away in McFarland's Down to the north.

Building Description(s):

The property is a detached bungalow which comprises three distinct roof sections; the main hipped roof to the west; a pitched roof over a garage (partially in residential use) to the east; and a flat-roof section which links the two and extends over a kitchen to the north. The different roof sections are given unique identifications A – C for the purposes of this report – these are identified in the plan provided in Map 02 in Appendix 1.

Building Overview

The bungalow is rendered white with well-fitted uPVC window and door frames throughout. The walls are in good condition with no cracks or other damage features which could potentially provide roosting opportunities for bats.

There is an under-boarded porch on the southern aspect which was well-sealed with no gaps or potential roosting features.

There are hanging tiles on the gables of the garage roof section to the east of the property – these are well-fitted aside from a minor gap at the base of the tiles on the southern gable – this was carefully inspected and found to be cobwebbed with no sign of historic or current use by bats.

These features are described for context, but it is understood that these would not be affected by the proposals.

Main Hipped Roof Structure – Section A (see Map 02 in Appendix A)

The main roof of the building is a hipped roof to the west. Tiles are flat-slate style and well-fitted throughout with no gaps or lifted sections noted. The ridge tiles, including those on the hipped sections, are well-fitted – occasional minor gaps in the mortar appeared superficial and did not offer roosting opportunities for bats. The only potential cavities were noted at the base of some hipped sections where they meet the eaves – here the mortar is damaged or missing in places. These offer minor niches but were inspected closely at height and found to be cobwebbed with no evidence of historic or current use by bats. However there remains a low potential for these features to be used in the future, especially if their condition changes. A vent is present close to the ridge on the western aspect, though this is likely to have a grill or fly-screen installed to prevent access. The lead flashing around the well-pointed chimney was tightly fitted.

Internally, the loft space is used for storage but is clean with insulation between the joists. There is sarking internally which is in good condition throughout. The roof is built around a typical timber truss framework and appears well-sealed at the eaves. A breeze-block chimney rises through the loft space and roof – this is well pointed with no gaps noted between the blocks. No evidence of bats was identified, though occasional rodent evidence was present. The potential features internally are restricted to minor gaps between timber joints, or free-hanging from timbers.

Fascia boards throughout this section of the roof were well-sealed with no gaps present. They support guttering which would restrict potential fly-in access to any potential access beneath tiles at the eaves.

Pitched Roof Structure – Section B (see Map 02 in Appendix A)

The pitched roof to the east of the building is structurally separated from the hipped roof (Section A) by the flat roof (Section C). The roof structure itself is covered with the same materials as Section A and is similarly well-sealed with no gaps noted associated with the roof or ridge tiles.

There is potential access for bats via gaps at the eaves of the building which are too wide to

provide roosting features in their own right, and lack a terminal apex for a crevice-dwelling species such as common pipistrelle, but would provide potential access to roosting features associated with the loft space.

Internally, the small loft space could not be fully accessed due to restricted size and the obstructions caused by roof-light columns which pass through the void. The roof is built around a timber-truss framework - there is no ridge present and the roof is under-felted throughout in good condition. Rodent droppings were noted. No evidence of bats was identified, but the restrictions on access to the void represent a constraint to survey.

Flat Roof Structure – Section C (see Map 02 in Appendix A)

There is a flat-roof structure which links the hipped and pitched roof sections – this was in good condition. The junction between this roof and the surrounding structures was generally good – there is a single section of lifted flashing in the northern corner at the junction with Roof Section B but this was inspected and found to be cobwebbed with no evidence of historic or recent occupation by bats.

Survey Limitations

The size of the loft space in Section B restricted comprehensive inspection of the void, especially towards the eaves. This is accounted for in the recommendations provided for a further PAS survey.

Assessment of Potential for use by Roosting Bats

It is considered that the structural features to be affected by the re-roofing proposals offer **low potential for use by roosting bats** – this is predominantly related to the pitched roof Section B**.**

This assessment is based on the following observations and conclusions:

- The roof space in Section B is accessible to bats via gaps at the eaves, but the void could not be adequately inspected due to its small size and the presence of obstructing structures. Any roosting bats, or evidence of their presence, could not therefore be adequately assessed through a direct inspection;
- The position of the building in relative isolation in the landscape, but directly backing onto the pine tree line, would increase the likelihood of occupation by bats.

This judgement was reached in accordance with the survey methodologies and evaluation criteria outlined in the Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines[2].

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, one further Presence/Absence Survey (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) between May and September. The

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

survey would require three surveyors in order to achieve a comprehensive view of the relevant features and should be supported by use of an infra-red or thermal imaging camera along the eastern aspect.

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.

If no bats are identified emerging/returning to the building then the results would be incorporated into a PAS report which, submitted alongside this PRA report, would form a suitable ecological basis to support a Planning Application.

If bats are identified emerging from the building, further surveys would be required to fully characterise the roost and provide sufficient evidence of Protected Species to inform a Planning Application.

Assessment of Potential for use by Nesting Birds

No evidence of nesting birds was identified associated with the property; however access at the eaves of the pitched roof Section B 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 (Birds):

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 this 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 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 vegetation within the garden and boundary hedges.

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 or within the garden. Boxes associated with the pine trees to the north would have a good chance of occupation.

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/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): [redacted] **Date:** 11th July 2023

APPENDIX 1
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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 hipped roof Section A (red wash) along with the pitched roof Section B (blue wash) and the connecting flat roof Section C (yellow wash). Reproduced in accordance with Google's Fair Use Policy.

Photograph 1: Showing the property viewed from the south-west showing the hipped roof Section A.

Photograph 2: Showing the property from the south-east with the pitched roof Section B over the garage unit.

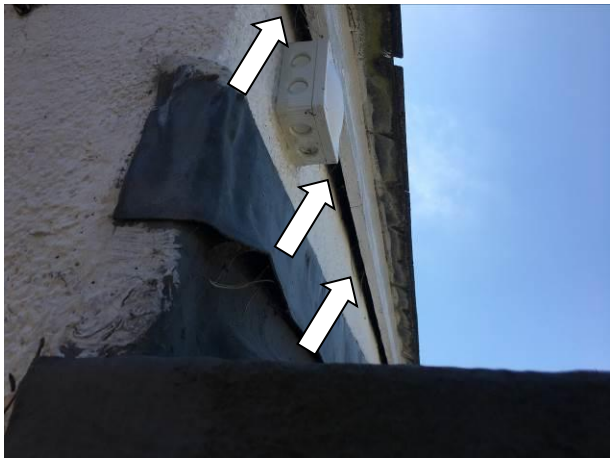
Photograph 3: Showing the flat roof Section C at the point where it links the other two roofs.

Photograph 4: Showing the flat roof Section C to the north of the property with the hipped roof Section A visible behind.

Photograph 5: Showing the interior of the loft space of the hipped roof Section A – the sarking boarding above the timber trusses can be seen.

Photograph 6: Showing the loft space of the pitched roof Section B which could not be fully inspected due to the size and construction.

Photograph 7: Showing an example of the minor sections of missing pointing at the base of the hipped ridge tiles in roof Section A.



Photograph 8: Showing an example of potential access for bats beneath the fascias at the eaves of roof Section B. The individual instance of lifted lead flashing associated with the junction between flat roof Section C and the surrounding structures can be seen below this.