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PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

RIVIERA HOUSE, ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY



Client: Mark Hampton

Our reference: 23-9-2

Planning reference: Report produced in advance of submission

Report date: 28th October 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 **moderate 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:

- **Two further PAS surveys** should be undertaken on the building to characterise and assess the use of the property 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 features around the eaves of the 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 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: Isles of Scilly	Location: SV 90392 10542	Planning Application ref: Report produced in advance of application
Planning application address: Riviera House, Lower Strand, Hugh Town, St Marys		
Proposed development: The proposed works were identified in outline by the client - these include: 1) Re-roofing the property.		
Building references: The building comprises four elements which are identified separately to aid description in the following assessment. These are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• East/west aspect of the pitched roof of the main dwelling;• North/south aspect of the pitched roof of the main dwelling;• Single-storey roof #1 situated between the two pitches of the main dwelling;• Single-storey roof #2 situated at the eastern gable of the main dwelling. These structural elements are 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 19 th October 2023 in accordance with relevant Best Practice methodology ¹ .		
Local and Landscape Setting: The property is an end-terrace house located on Lower Strand in Hugh Town. The road runs to the north and west of the property with a small courtyard garden to the north-east. The property is attached on its southern aspect, but is closely surrounded by further residential development to the east. To the west of the property lies the road, with the Parade Gardens beyond. The central location of the property within Hugh Town means that the dominant local land use is built environment. This is predominantly residential with small-scale commercial businesses also represented. This densely built environment extends around 300m to the west and around 500m to the east. Some of these adjacent properties have associated areas of garden or green space, but the centre of Hugh Town is relatively densely developed. The location of the building is within the narrowest part of Hugh Town with Town Beach and Porthcressa lying 25m to the north and 100m to the south respectively.		

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

The closest areas of green space are the Parade Gardens <10m to the west; and the grassed area adjacent to Porthcressa Beach lying to the south-west. Both of these areas are dominated by close-mown amenity grassland with ornamental planting, reflecting their popularity with visitors and fundamentally municipal function. The closest areas of semi-natural habitat are associated with the Garrison approximately 250m to the west; and the land around Buzza Tower approximately 250m to the south-east.

The desk study showed that no species of bat had previously been recorded roosting on the Site or associated with properties bounding the Site. A data search revealed information on five species of bat 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.

Three 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 and behind fascia boards in properties within the town.

Building Description

The property is split into two households with the top floor comprising a holiday let known as Riviera House and the lower floor comprising a residential dwelling known as Little Riviera. The proposals are restricted to re-roofing works, therefore the survey and assessment focusses on the roof structure and the adjacent external features on the upper floor.

Main House

The property is a granite-built two-storey house with a wet-laid scantle tile roof. The roof of the property has two pitches; one which is oriented east/west which fronts onto the Parade Gardens; the other which is oriented north/south.

The north/south oriented pitch has a loft space which was accessed for inspection. This was boarded out above the rafters and appeared well sealed. It was used for routine storage which precluded a comprehensive inspection of the void. The floor is boarded out. No droppings or other evidence of bats was identified within those areas which could be accessed for inspection.

The rooms are built into the rafters throughout the majority of the east/west pitch, with the exception of a minor void at the apex in one room. However these rooms also have eaves storage, only some of which were accessible at the time of survey. Those which could be inspected appeared to be sealed in a manner which would preclude access for bats.

The roofs were inspected externally from ground level with close-focusing binoculars. The north/south pitch could only be inspected from the north – the southern pitch could not be viewed due to intervening buildings and other obstructions. Minor gaps at the ridge of the west-facing pitch were noted, but the remaining roof structure appeared well-sealed. There is an external covering on the east-facing pitch which seals the exterior. Drop tiles are present on the northern gable only – these appear well-pointed. The roof verge on the eastern gable appears well pointed.

The fascias on the east/west facing pitch have gaps throughout which could provide access to potential roosting opportunities for bats either as a feature in their own right or as access to roosting opportunities beneath the tiles or associated with the wall plate.

Fascias on the north/south facing pitch are well-sealed.

There is a single dormer on the east-facing pitch and two dormers on the west-facing pitch. Hanging tiles appear well sealed but there are gaps beneath the flashing in the valley where the dormer roof meets the main pitch.

A rendered chimney lies at the northern end of the east/west facing pitch – this appeared to be well sealed including the junction with the roof itself.

Single-pitch #1

This single-pitch roof occupies the ground-floor junction between the two pitches of the main dwelling. The wet-laid scantle-tiled roof is well-sealed and the lead-lined junction between the roof and the adjacent wall is tightly fitted. The fascias are also well-sealed.

Single-pitch #2

This single-pitch roof lies at the eastern end of the main house. The wet-laid scantle-tiled roof is well-sealed but there are gaps behind the fascias which could provide access to potential roosting opportunities for bats either as a feature in their own right or as access to roosting opportunities beneath the tiles or associated with the wall plate.

Survey Limitations

The boarding within the accessible loft space would preclude direct inspection of roosting opportunities beneath the tiles, or the identification of any evidence arising from a roost in this location. The storage within the loft precluded a comprehensive inspection. Sealed voids at the apex or inaccessible eaves storage areas would preclude inspection of these locations.

The presence of some features at height, including gaps beneath roof tiles or behind fascias at the roof line would preclude direct inspection and assessment.

The southern pitch of the north/south roof could not be visually inspected – therefore the potential for this pitch to provide roosting opportunities for bats could not be determined.

Assessment of Potential for use by Roosting Bats

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

This is based on the following observations and conclusions:

- There are multiple locations where roosting bats, or evidence of their presence, could not be adequately assessed through an inspection due to the nature of the roosting opportunities. This includes gaps behind fascias, as well as internalised structural features which could then be accessed such as gaps between tiles and under-felting/boarding and features associated with the wall plate. Bats could not be directly observed if present in these features, and the nature of the features would preclude droppings from being found during an inspection;
- The characteristics of the opportunities presented by the building, including the gaps behind the fascias, correspond with known confirmed roosts within Hugh Town on similar properties.

This judgement was reached in accordance with the survey methodologies and evaluation criteria outlined in the Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines².

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, two further Presence/Absence Surveys (PAS) would be required to provide an appropriate evidence-base

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

upon which to support a planning application.

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) and/or experienced surveyor(s) between May and September with at least one survey between May and August. The surveys would require three surveyors on each occasion in order to achieve a comprehensive view of the relevant features and should be spaced at least two weeks apart.

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 these surveys 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

No evidence of nesting birds was identified associated with the property; however access behind fascia boards at the eaves of the property 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 (Nesting Birds):

Timing of Works

Works affecting the property 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, to confirm that no nests are present. In the unlikely event that a bird’s 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 any vegetation within the courtyard garden.

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.

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 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.

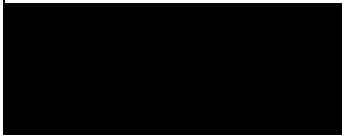
Boxes can be sourced online, or can be constructed on site using methodology and specifications provided by the RSPB:

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):

Date: 28th October 2023



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 distinct structural components which comprise the property and are referred to in the report. The east/west and north/south pitch together comprise the main dwelling. Please note boundaries are indicative and illustrative only.



Photograph 1: Showing the loft space above the kitchen in the north/south aspect of the pitched roof.



Photograph 2: Showing the rooms in the east/west pitched roof which are largely built into the rafters with the exception of minor sealed voids at the apex in one room.



Photograph 3: Showing eastern pitch of the roof with the small dormer present. The surface covering above the scantle tiles can be seen.



Photograph 4: Showing the western pitch of the roof – the gaps beneath the fascia are indicated along with an example of a gap beneath a tile below the chimney.



Photograph 5: Showing the well-pointed drop tiles on the northern gable.



Photograph 6: Showing the gaps behind the fascia boards on the eastern pitch.



Photograph 7: Showing the single pitch #1 in the foreground with the gaps behind the fascia of the east-facing pitch indicated.



Photograph 8: Showing the gaps behind the fascia on single pitch #2.



Photograph 9: Showing the entrance on the northern aspect – this is at the first-floor level. The fascias on this aspect are well-sealed.



Photograph 10: Showing the northern gable of the pitched roof and the single pitch #1 in the foreground.