

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

GUTHERS,
ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY



Client: Mike & Karrie Skaiife

Our reference: 24-7-4

Planning reference: Report produced in advance of submission

Report date: 20th July 2024

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Executive Summary

Bats - Results and Findings

The preliminary roost assessment (PRA) survey of the property concluded that there is **Moderate Potential** for use by roosting 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 property 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

The property itself may provide suitable nesting habitat for species such as house sparrow which will commonly utilise nesting opportunities within damaged soffits and similar structural features within Hugh Town. Further potential nesting habitat is associated with the garden areas surrounding the property.

Nesting Birds - Recommendations

Timing of works to avoid the breeding season is recommended as the optimal way to avoid impacts to nesting birds; alternatively pre-commencement inspections are recommended to ensure that nesting birds are not impacted by the proposed works.

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 90835 10463	Planning Application ref: Report produced in advance of application
Planning application address: Guther's, Church Road, 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 including: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Replacement of the existing cedar shingle roof covering;2) Structural works to replace the existing dormer and add new dormers to the roof pitch;3) Installation of additional windows in the gables of the property;4) Further external and internal renovation works.		
Building references: The building comprises a single residential dwelling which 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 external visual inspection was undertaken on 16 th July 2024 in accordance with relevant Best Practice methodology ¹ .		
Local and Landscape Setting: The building is located to the south-eastern end of Hugh Town, where the land rises and the character of the housing becomes more widely spaced with larger gardens in contrast to the more tightly spaced buildings which characterise the main town. The land use immediately surrounding the building is residential development to the north, south and west with associated gardens, roads, hardstanding and access features. To the east of the property is a large garden which extends down the slope towards a wooded treeline and further open habitat. Beyond the residential edge of the town to the east, there is abundant suitable habitat. Approximately 160m to the east 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. Small-scale agricultural fields and associated trees and hedge lines occur to the east. The desk study did not reveal any records of bats recorded roosting within the building		

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

historically; however a common pipistrelle roost is recorded in an adjacent building.

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 west.

Building Description

The property is a single-storey dormer bungalow with the first floor accommodation built into the roof space of the property.

The walls are rendered externally – the covering appears to be in generally good condition except in discreet locations associated with the windows, as detailed below.

The windows and doors of the property are a combination of timber-frame single-glazed units and uPVC double-glazed units. The more modern windows are well-fitted, but there are frequently small gaps around the frame or sill of the older timber windows which could potentially offer minor roosting opportunities for individual bats. The more easterly window on the southern gable has significant damage in the lower corner which provides access to the cavity wall and would represent a potential opportunity for bats, including larger colonies, to access roosting features associated with this void.

There are soffits running along the eaves and a fascia board on the gable at the roof verge. The soffits are generally well-fitted with the exception of the south-eastern corner where a gap is present allowing potential access for bats or nesting birds to utilise roosting opportunities associated with the void. There is a gap behind the fascia on the gable on this same corner which would similarly provide access to roosting opportunities.

There are cedar shingles on the underside of the gable overhang on both aspects and occasional gaps occur between the shingle and the gable wall which may provide access to roosting opportunities.

The roof covering itself comprises multiple layers of overlapping cedar shingles. There are minor lifted elements throughout the roof, and at the gable verge, though the nature of the construction means these are relatively superficial and are unlikely to be used on a routine basis by roosting bats – occasional use on a transient or exploratory basis is possible. The cedar ridge appears well-sealed.

There is a rendered chimney set within the western pitch of the roof – the junction with the cedar shingle roof is sealed with flashing which appears to be in good condition.

The soffit on the existing dormer on the eastern aspect of the property is well-sealed and the shingle tiling both on the roof and on the sides of the dormer appear to be in a similar condition to the remainder of the roof, offering only minor, superficial gaps. There is flashing at the apex of the valley junction between the dormer and roof which appears to be well-fitted.

Internally, the upper floor accommodation is built into the roof space with boxed voids at the eaves and at the apex above the tie-beam of the A-frame trusses.

There is no underfelting in the property with tiles attached directly to battens and visible from the internal inspection. There is insulation between the joists in places, and the breeze block gable walls are visible – these appear well-pointed internally. The eaves voids were fully accessed and inspected for evidence of roosting bats – no droppings or other evidence was identified although rodent and bird droppings were identified confirming the scope for access

to the voids. Daylight visible between gaps in places further supports this. The apex void was viewed from a hatch but could not be fully accessed for inspection due to constraints on the size of the void – this appears to represent an equivalent roof structure and condition to the eaves voids.

In summary, the following potential roosting opportunities were identified associated with the property:

- Access to the cavity wall in the south-eastern corner of the property below a window-frame;
- Access to roosting opportunities within, or accessible via, the eastern soffit;
- Access to roosting opportunities within, or accessible via, the southern fascia;
- Roosting opportunities within the eaves and apex voids;
- Roosting opportunities above the gable wall plate, accessible by gaps between cedar shingles on the gable overhang and the gable wall;
- Superficial transient/occasional roosting opportunities associated with gaps between cedar shingles;
- Superficial transient/occasional roosting opportunities associated with minor gaps around deteriorating timber window frames.

Survey Limitations

The following limitations on survey were noted:

- The internal voids at the apex of the roof could not be fully inspected, though it was accessed and visually assessed with regards to structure and condition;
- It was not possible to inspect at height features such as gaps in the verge or gable fascia;
- 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 above the wall plate or within the cavity wall.

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 property is identified as providing **Moderate Potential** for use by roosting bats. This assessment also acknowledges the position of the property on the periphery of Hugh Town backing directly onto suitable foraging habitat to the east.

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 2x 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 the detection of roosting locations which cannot be directly visually inspected.

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

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. A minimum of two 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 property itself may provide suitable nesting habitat for species such as house sparrow which will commonly utilise nesting opportunities within damaged soffits and similar structural features within Hugh Town.

No evidence of nesting birds utilising features associated with the building structure was however recorded at the time of survey.

Further potential nesting opportunities are associated with the garden and surrounding vegetation which may be directly or indirectly impacted by the proposed work including during erection of scaffolding and contractor presence.

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

The proposed works could 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.

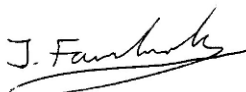
Pre-commencement Inspection

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 the shrubs and other vegetation associated with the garden areas.

Signed by bat worker(s):

Date: 21st July 2024



APPENDIX 1

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LOCATION PLAN AND PHOTOGRAPHS



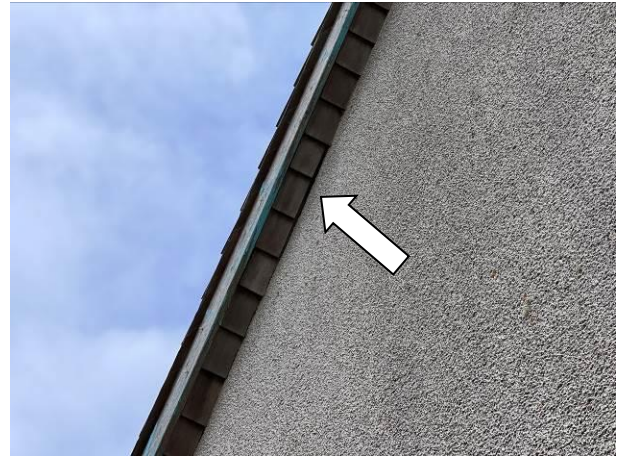
Map 01 – Illustrating the location of the property within the local environs (red circle). Reproduced in accordance with Google’s Fair Use Policy.



Map 02 – Showing the property within the local environs – the open access to green space and the wider countryside beyond can be seen to the east of the site.



Photograph 1: Showing the southern gable of the property



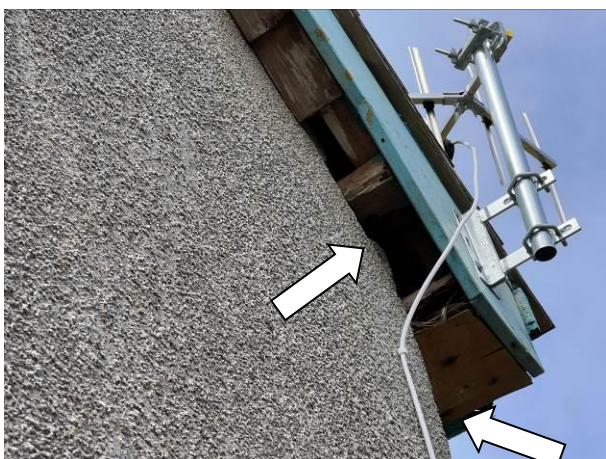
Photograph 2: Showing the cedar shingles lining the overhang on the gables – an example of the potential access points between the wall and the shingle is indicated.



Photograph 3: Showing the chimney set within the shingle roof



Photograph 4: Showing the potential access to the cavity wall below the window frame on the south-eastern corner of the property



Photograph 5: Showing the damage to the gable fascia and eaves soffit on the south-eastern corner of the property



Photograph 6: Showing the dormer window set within the eastern roof pitch of the property



Photograph 7: Showing an example of the soffit voids within the property – the cedar shingles directly attached to the roof battens are visible



Photograph 8: Showing the apex void as viewed from the access hatch. The structural framework of the contiguous dormer void can be seen on the RHS of the image.