

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

COASTGUARD'S RETREAT, ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY



Client: Nicola Heneghan

Our reference: 24-6-9

Planning reference: Report produced in advance of submission

Report date: 15th July 2024

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Executive Summary

Bats – Results and Findings

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

The flat-roof extension on the property is considered to provide **Negligible 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 pitched-roof cottage 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 provides nesting habitat for house sparrow, both through bird boxes installed on the cottage and gaps in the soffit. Further potential nesting habitat is associated with the garden areas surrounding the property.

Nesting Birds - Recommendations

Pre-emptive measures to remove and relocate nest boxes during the winter would minimise the risk of nesting birds being present when works commence.

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.

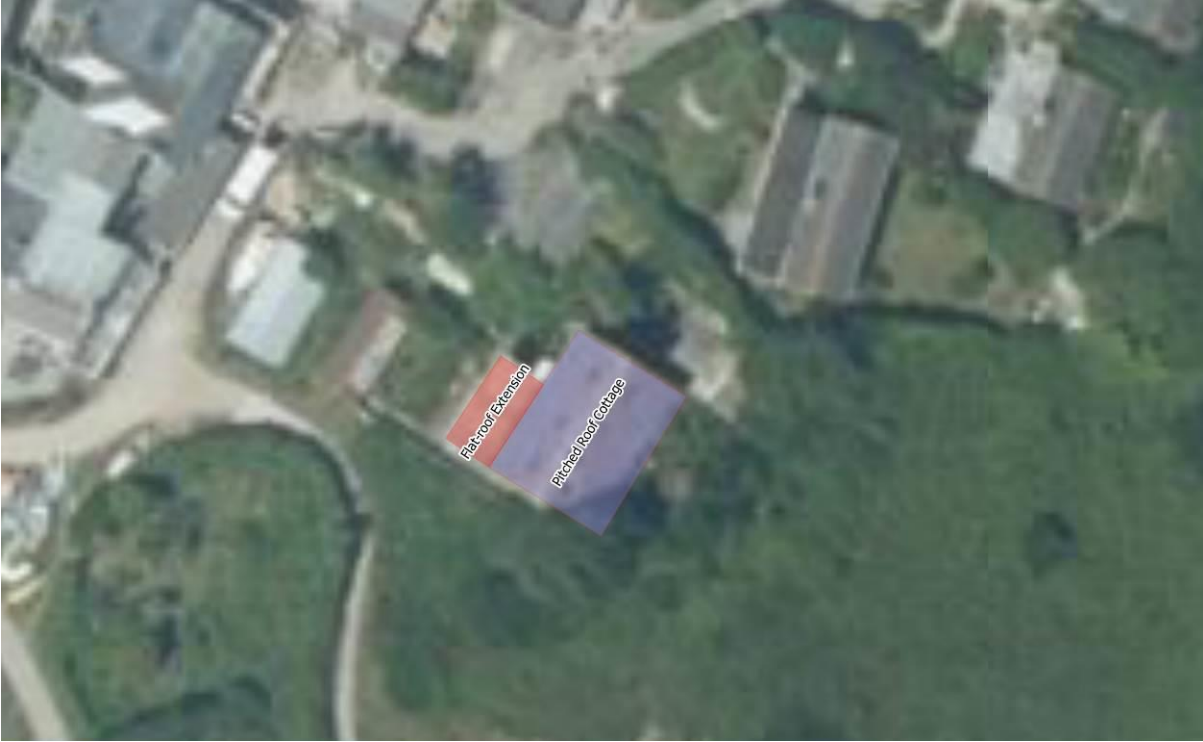
Other Ecological Receptors

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 90548 10407	Planning Application Ref: Report produced in advance of application
Planning application address: Coastguard's Retreat, 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) Installation of dormer extensions into the existing roof;2) Further external and internal renovation works.		
Building references: The building comprises two distinct elements which differ in structure and materials, and subsequently their potential to support roosting bats. These are identified in the map below. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pitched-roof Cottage shown in the blue wash;• Flat-roof Extension shown in the red wash.		
		
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 9th July 2024 in accordance with relevant Best Practice methodology¹.

Local and Landscape Setting:

Coastguard's Retreat is situated at the eastern end of Porthcressa Beach on the southern edge of Hugh Town in St Mary's, Isles of Scilly.

The Site is bounded to the north and west by residential development which continues – along with small-scale commercial properties – through Hugh Town to the north, north-east and north-west. Some of the proximate properties have associated areas of garden or green space, but the centre of Hugh Town is relatively densely developed.

To the east of the site, directly beyond the garden area, lie the vegetated habitats of Buzza Hill with allotments and further coastal grassland and pasture beyond.

The sandy beach of Porthcressa grades into a rocky coastline approximately 50m to the south-west of the site and extends to the west and south-east.

The desk study did not reveal any records of bats recorded roosting within the building historically. 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 south-east.

Building Description*Pitched Roof Cottage*

The main cottage is a pitch-roofed dwelling which is rendered white externally. The property is a single storey high to the east but two storeys high to the west due to the change in level across the site.

The building has predominantly uPVC windows with timber door frames – the frames appear well-fitted in their apertures throughout the property.

The pitched roof is covered by interlocking tiles with ridge tiles. The structure of the tiles results in intermittent gaps which may permit access beneath but would also be capable of supporting individual bats as a roosting opportunity in their own right. The ridge tiles appear well-pointed. There are multiple skylights in the roof and, whilst many of these are tightly fitted with cement flaunching at the junction with the tiles, there are access gaps beneath tiles associated with others.

Internally, the roof is largely converted to residential living space. An apex void above the tie-beam of the A-frame trusses can be viewed but not accessed due to the small size of the space at just 30-40cm at the tallest point. Well-fitted felting can be seen above the rafters with a ridge beam present. It is not clear if this void would be accessible to bats due to the limitations of access to inspect the extent of the void.

Similarly at the eaves of the upper floor residential space, there are boxed storage areas, some of which are finished and boarded out and used for routine storage whilst others are unfinished

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

with roofing felt visible above the rafters. Rodent droppings were recorded, but no evidence of bats was identified within these voids.

The rendered chimney is well-sealed at the junction with the roof with tightly fitted lead flashing.

A uPVC fascia is present on the gables, and there are minor gaps in both the north-eastern and south-western fascias which could potentially provide access for roosting bats. On the south-western gable, there is also a minor portion of missing pointing at the roof verge which could similarly provide an access features.

The soffit on the western aspect is partially obscured by the flat-roof extension described separately, and could not be fully inspected. However at the northern end, there is a visible gap and the presence of vegetation indicates it is used by nesting birds – likely house sparrow. This would imply access would also be possible for roosting bats.

Flat-roof Extension

A two-storey flat-roof extension is present on the western aspect of the cottage. The lower portion is rendered whilst the upper portion is uPVC clad – the finish in all instances is tight with no gaps noted. There is a uPVC fascia running along the apex of the wall with no gaps noted. The flat roof is clad with translucent panels which allow an abundance of light into the upper room.

The construction materials and condition of this building would not offer identifiable roosting opportunities for bats.

Survey Limitations

The following limitations on survey were noted:

- The internal voids at the eaves and apex of the cottage could not be fully inspected though all were 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;
- The soffit on the western aspect of the cottage could not be fully inspected due to the intervening flat-roof extension;
- 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 underfelt in the roof structure.

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 pitched-roof cottage is identified as providing **Moderate Potential** for use by roosting bats. This includes a range of features primarily associated with the roof structure.

This assessment also acknowledges the position of the property on the periphery of Hugh Town backing directly onto suitable foraging habitat associated with Buzza Hill and the countryside beyond.

The flat-roof extension is considered to provide **Negligible Potential** for use by roosting bats.

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 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. A minimum of three 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 building is confirmed to support nesting house sparrows associated with boxes positioned on the eastern and northern aspect of the property, some of which were occupied at the time of survey. The soffit on the western aspect of the pitched-roof cottage is also likely to support nesting house sparrow.

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).

Pre-emptive Removal of Nest Boxes

It is recommended that the nest boxes are removed from the building during the winter period (October – February inclusive) once it is confirmed that birds have ceased nesting. These should be installed in alternative locations around the property where they can remain undisturbed during the works.

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

It is recommended, subject to the results of the bat survey, that the gap in the soffit on the western aspect is also sealed during the winter period to prevent this feature from being re-used by nesting birds in the spring. This must only be undertaken if the recommended PAS surveys confirm that there are no roosting bats associated with this feature.

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.

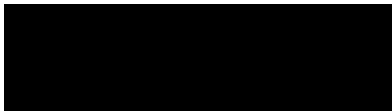
Pre-commencement Inspection

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: 15th July 2024



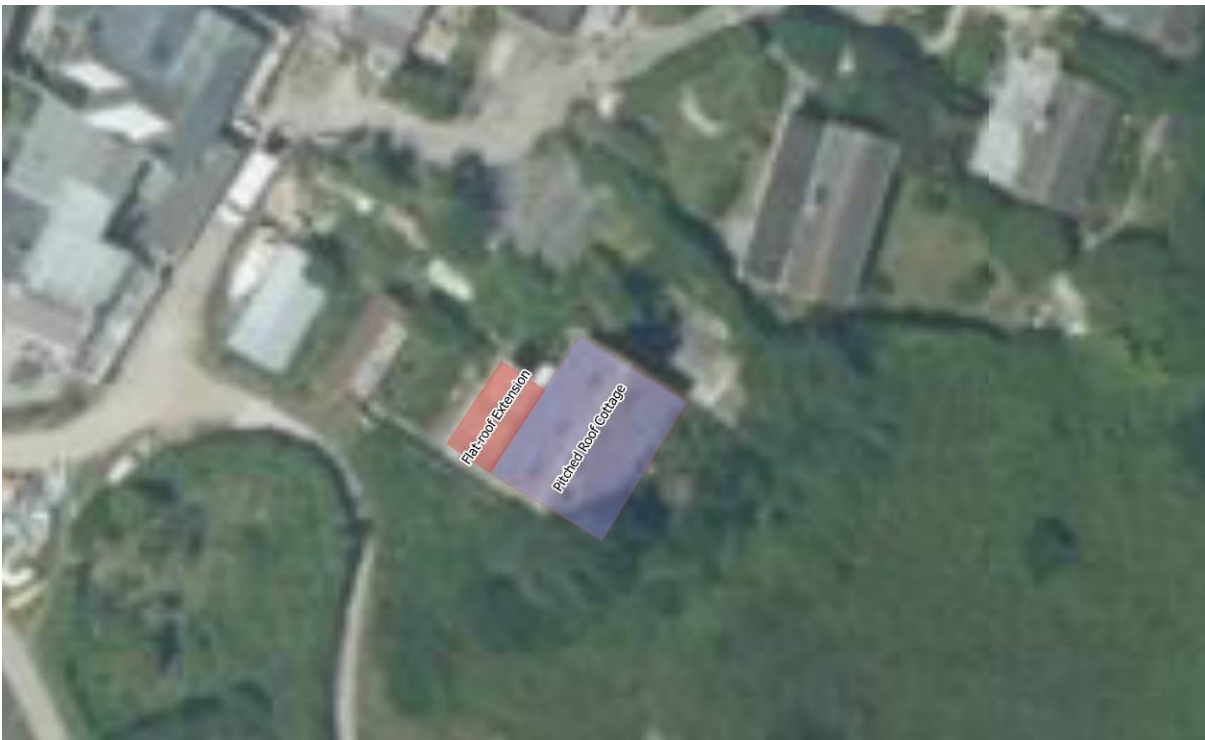
APPENDIX 1

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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 different elements of the building included within the survey scope due to either direct or potential indirect impacts arising from the proposals.



Photograph 1: Showing the internal boxed area at the eaves – this is an example of an un-finished void.



Photograph 2: Showing the small apex void as viewed from the small hatch



Photograph 3: Showing an example of the gap beneath a tile at the edge of the roof



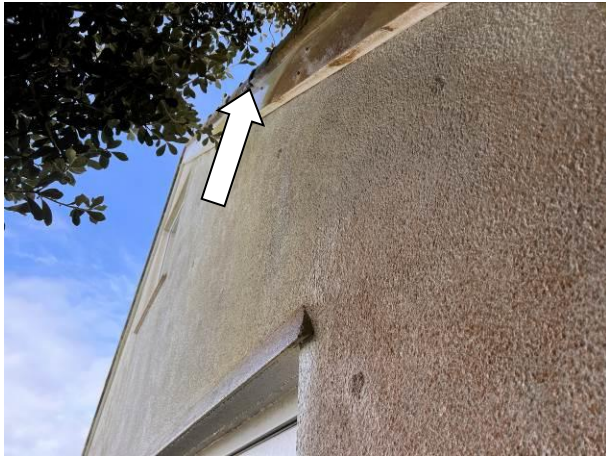
Photograph 4: Showing an example of the gaps at the intersections between tiles



Photograph 5: Showing the rear of the property (eastern aspect) – one of the bird boxes is indicated



Photograph 6: Showing an example of a gap at the junction between the eaves soffit and the uPVC gable cladding.



Photograph 7: Showing the southern gable where the uPVC cladding is otherwise tightly fitted. The location of the missing pointing in the verge is indicated.



Photograph 8: Showing the flat-roof extension on the western aspect of the property. The fibreglass roof can be seen through the upper floor window.



Photograph 9: Showing the bird boxes on the northern gable



Photograph 10: Showing the gap in the soffit on the western gable with vegetation present indicating use as a nesting site.