PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

SOUTH HILL,
BRYHER, ISLES OF SCILLY

Client: *Philip Spence*

Our reference: *25-7-5*

Planning reference: *Report produced in advance of submission*

Report date: *4th August 2025*

Author: *James Faulconbridge BSc (Hons), MRes, MCIEEM*

[redacted]

Executive Summary

Bats – Results and Findings
The preliminary roost assessment (PRA) survey of the relevant aspects of South Hill on Bryher concluded that there is **Low Potential** for use by bats.
Bats – Further Survey Requirements
The following recommendation is provided in order to ensure a suitable baseline to ensure legislative compliance and to avoid negative impacts to Protected Species: • **One further Presence/Absence Survey (PAS)** should be undertaken on the relevant aspect of South Hill to characterise and assess the potential use of the roof structures by bats in order to meet the standard of survey required by Best Practice Guidance to ensure legislative compliance during the proposed works and support Planning.

Nesting Birds – Results and Findings
Evidence indicative of a nest was noted on the western roof of the property and there is potential for individual bird species to find nesting habitat associated with the roof of the property, especially under fascias or within the associated garden.
Nesting Birds - Recommendations
Works should take account of the risk of species such as sparrow or robin making use of nesting opportunities during the breeding season. Recommendations are provided to ensure this, including timing of works or pre-commencement inspections.

Other Ecological Receptors
No further ecological impacts relevant to planning are identified.

Report Status
As the requirement for a further PAS survey is identified in accordance with the Best Practice Guidance, this report **does not provide a comprehensive baseline** 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:**
Council of the Isles of Scilly	SV 87808 14685	Report produced in advance of application

Planning application address:

South Hill, Bryher, Isles of Scilly

Proposed development:

The proposed works were identified by the client when instructing the PRA inspection and should accord with the proposals:

1) Conversion of an existing single-storey component of the property to a two-storey structure.

For clarity and brevity, this report focuses on those structural elements of the property which would be directly or indirectly impacted by the above proposals. It does not represent a comprehensive assessment of the property as a whole, much of which would not be affected by the proposals.

Building references:

The building is identified in the map 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 2nd August 2025 in accordance with relevant Best Practice methodology[1].

Local and Landscape Setting:

The semi-detached property is located just south of the centre of the island of Bryher in the Isles of Scilly.

The land immediately surrounding the property, beyond the residential garden, comprise small scale agricultural use by Hillside and Veronica Farms with varying land use including grazing, small-scale arable and polytunnels with a variety of fruits and vegetables. A number of agricultural and residential buildings are located in the immediate vicinity including Hillside Farm with associated holiday lets and agricultural properties to the north-west; and Veronica Farm and further residential buildings to the north-east.

The coastline is in close proximity to both the east and west. Beyond the agricultural land use to the north, the land is predominantly undermanaged scrub with heathy components and abundant non-native self-set species such as pittosporum. There is abundant additional semi-natural habitat including dune grassland; heathland and mixed scrub in close proximity on the

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

island.

Two common pipistrelle roosts are formally recorded, and a further two are anecdotally recorded within 500m of the Site. The confirmed roosts relate to non-breeding summer roosts of common pipistrelle, though others anecdotally recorded have emergence numbers consistent with maternity use.

No other species of bats are known to be present on the island of Bryher although brown long-eared bats are known to inhabit nearby Tresco and St Mary's; along with soprano pipistrelle on St Mary's and transient summer records of Leisler's and Nathusius' pipistrelle which are not thought to be breeding.

Building Description

The following description will provide an overview of the construction and structural condition of the property with a focus on features which, by their design or condition, could provide suitable roosting opportunities for bats.

Overview

South Hill comprises a two-storey granite-built cottage with a single-storey extension to the south; and mono-pitch extensions on the western aspects of both of these core components. The property is semi-detached on its northern aspect.

Two-Storey Cottage

The two-storey cottage is of granite construction with a pitched synthetic-tile roof.

The granite walls are well-pointed with no gaps or cavities noted. The sash-windows are well-fitted within their apertures with no gaps noted associated with the junction of these materials.

A wooden fascia runs along the eaves on both aspects; the extensions on the western aspect tie in just below this feature which would preclude any direct fly-in access for bats but gaps were noted between the timber and the irregular blockwork of the granite to which it is attached on the eastern aspect. This could potentially provide access to roosting features associated with the wall plate; or provide roosting opportunities in its own right.

The synthetic-slate roof tiles were well-fitted with no gaps noted – similarly the pointing on the ridge tiles was in good condition. Roof lights on the western aspect appeared well-fitted.

Two chimneys situated at either end of the roof were brick-built and rendered respectively – in each case the structural elements were well sealed/pointed though minor superficial gaps occur beneath the flashing where these structures meet the roof.

The southern gable of the property has slate drop-tiles along the verge which have gaps behind – these could potentially provide access to roosting features associated with the wall plate; or provide roosting opportunities in their own right.

There is no loft space associated with the roof; the upper floor accommodation is built largely into the roof space although a small sealed void occurs at the apex of the roof.

Single-Storey Extension

The single-storey extension on the southern aspect of the two-storey cottage is of similar construction.

The gaps behind the fascia on the eastern aspect was fully inspected with a video endoscope – these were predominantly sealed or superficial though minor gaps and niches do occur which could potentially support individual roosting bats.

Gaps behind the drop tiles on the southern gable were inspected with a video endoscope – these did not provide access to the fabric of the building where larger roosts might be supported; however the gaps between the tiles and the wall itself would provide suitable roosting niches

for individual bats.

There is a gap between the two-storey and the single-storey structures at the roofline of the single-storey component which is accessible at the eaves and extends beyond the reach of the video endoscope to inspect – the dimensions and fly-in access to this feature on the eastern aspect would provide a suitable roosting opportunity for bats. On the western aspect, the potential fly-in for this feature is obstructed by the roofline of the mono-pitch roof which ties in just below it; however there appears to be nesting material indicating likely use by breeding birds.

There is no loft space associated with this roof with the accommodation built largely into the roof space; however a small sealed void occurs at the apex of the roof.

Mono-pitch Extensions and Porch

The extensions on the western aspect of the property as well as the porch on the eastern aspect were inspected. Whilst features suitable to support roosting bats were noted in these structures, these were restricted to features at the eaves or were otherwise situated in a way which, due to their physical separation from the proposed area of works, would not be directly or indirectly impacted by the proposals. These are not therefore given further consideration in this report.

Survey Limitations

The following limitations on survey were noted:

- The sealed voids at the apex of the building could not be accessed for inspection;
- Some features such as the drop tiles on the gable of the two-storey cottage could not be safely inspected at height;
- 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 within the sealed void or associated with the wall plate.

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 following potential roosting opportunities are identified associated with the relevant aspects of South Hill:

- Gaps in the fascia on the eastern aspect of the two-storey cottage and single-storey extension;
- Gaps behind the drop tiles on the southern gables of the two-storey cottage and single-storey extension;
- A cavity which extends up the gap between the two-storey cottage and single-storey extension at the roofline of the single-storey component.

The majority of these potential features are small in extent and likely to support only individual or transient roost sites for common species such as common pipistrelle.

In conclusion, the property is considered to have **low potential** to support roosting bats.

Recommendations and Justification (Bats):

In accordance with the criteria outlined in the Best Practice Guidance[2], the following surveys would be required to provide an appropriate evidence-base upon which to ensure legislative compliance

- 1x Presence/Absence Survey (PAS).

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 a Licensed Bat Worker between mid-May and mid-September. A minimum of two Night Vision Aid (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.

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

Evidence indicating likely use by nesting birds was recorded at the time of survey, and the structure has the potential to provide suitable nest sites for common bird species such as house sparrow. This is associated with the roof, though some of the fascia features identified as suitable for use by roosting bats may also be capable of supporting breeding birds.

There is also potential for nesting birds to use areas within the garden or adjacent structures which could be indirectly disturbed by contractor presence or erection of scaffolding.

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

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.

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

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.

Enhancement Opportunities

If the applicant wished to mitigate the loss of the nesting opportunity associated with the roof and 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 mature garden 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.

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 South Hill building – the semi-detached property to the north is visible but not identified.

Photograph 1: Showing the view of the property from south-east with the single-storey extension in the foreground and the two-storey cottage in the background

Photograph 2: Showing the fascia which runs along the eastern aspect of the two-storey cottage. This feature is present but the fly-in is obstructed on the western aspect.

Photograph 3: Showing the fascia which runs along the eastern aspect of the single-storey extension. This feature is present but the fly-in is obstructed on the western aspect.

Photograph 4: Showing the drop tiles present on the southern gable of the two-storey cottage above the roofline of the single-storey extension

Photograph 5: Showing the drop tiles present on the southern aspect of the single-storey extension.

Photograph 6: Showing the gap which extends along the roofline between the single-storey extension and the two-storey cottage.

Photograph 7: Showing the interior room with the minor sealed void visible at the apex.

Photograph 8: Showing the property from the south-western aspect – the mono-pitch extensions are visible in the foreground.