

Sensible Ecological Survey Solutions

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Sensible Ecological Survey Solutions Limited is a registered company

'WOODLANDS, LODGE LANE, CRONTON, WIDNES'

PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEY STATEMENT

Introduction

Sensible Ecology Survey Solutions was instructed to complete buildings protected species survey at a site referred to as:-

"Woodlands, Lodge Lane., Cronton, Widnes, WA8 4QB"

Two structures were subject to inspection and assessment; a detached two storey residential building, which is currently unoccupied (Figure 1; Photographs A, B & C) and a detached two & one storey workshop/garage structure (Photographs H & I).

Plans are being advanced to demolish the structures to allow for redevelopment of the site for new residential usage. The new structure will largely occupy the footprint of the existing buildings.

The proposed demolition of the buildings could be harmful to legally protected species such as bats if wildlife were to be currently dependent on the structure. This report presents the findings of a standard 'External and Internal Buildings Protected Species Survey'; combined with an 'Appraisal of the Potential of the Building to Support Roosting Bats' based on its physical features.

Description of Site and Surveyed Buildings

The two storey residential building (Photographs A, B & C) measures approximately 12m x 9m x 7m high, and the workshop building (Photographs H & I) measures approximately 10m x 7m x 5m high. Both buildings have pitched slate covered roofing which is in good repair (Photographs D & J). Both buildings have rendered walls which are again in good order.

The residential building has a single storey extension attached to the east facing gable end (Photograph C) and porches to the front and rear. The slate roofing covering the extension and porches is in good repair and well sealed (Photograph F). The four chimney stacks are rendered, in good repair and flashing to roofing interfaces well sealed (Photograph D). The building has a single large roof chamber/loft. In the roof chamber plastic sheet backing to the slate roofing is exposed (Photograph G).

The workshop building is two storey to the front with a single storey extension to the rear (Photographs H & I). The building has uPVC fascia to its gable ends (Photographs J & K) which is in good repair. Some missing mortar seal to dry verge roof/wall interface is present (Photograph K). Internally the chambers are used as a workshop or for general storage (Photograph L). The roofing framework is exposed internally (Photograph M).

Figure 1: Aerial view of site. *Note: The surveyed buildings are identified by red boxing. The residential structure is to the right and the detached workshop to the left.*



Photograph A: General View of front (south facing) and east facing gable end to residential building.



Photograph B: General view of frontage and west facing gable end to residential building.

Note: render coverage of walls is in good condition and well sealed with no apparent access opportunities for bats to gain access. Windows and doors are well sealed.



Photograph C: General view of rear (north facing) frontage to residential building.

Note: Single storey extension with sloping slate covered roofing..



Photograph D: Sample close up view of slate roofing to residential building.

Note: The slate roofing is in good general condition, with no significant gapping or missing slates recorded. Ridge tiles are well bedded down, and flashing to base of chimney stacks is well sealed. Timber barge boarding supporting guttering at wall/roof interfaces is in good repair and well sealed.



Photograph E: Close up east facing gable end to residential building.

Note: Mortar dry verge seal is in good repair and well sealed. All chimney stacks are in good repair with no access opportunities for bats or birds recorded.



Photograph F: Close up sample view of slate coverings to windows and front door porch.

Note: The states, ridge tiles and flashing are all in good repair and well sealed.



Photograph G: Sample view of plastic sheet backing to slate roofing, exposed within single roof chamber/loft above residential building.

Note: The sheeting is in good repair throughout, with no significant tears or holes recorded. The loft chamber is well sealed to wall/roof interfaces with no access opportunities for bats or birds recorded.



Photograph H: View of south and east facing frontages to detached workshop/garage structure.



Photograph I: View of west facing frontage to workshop structure.

Note: The structure is two storey to the front with a single storey extension to rear. Slate roofing covers the entire building. The render covering the walls of the structure is in good repair throughout.



Photograph J: Sample close up view of roofing to workshop structure.

Note: The slate roofing and ridge tiles are generally in good repair and well sealed.



Photograph K: Sample close up view of west facing gable end apex to workshop structure.

Note: uPVC fascia common to both gable ends of the structure is in good repair and well sealed. Minor dry verge mortar loss was recorded, as seen in the image.



Photograph L: Internal ground floor view of workshop structure.

Note: The workshop chambers are well sealed internally. The steps leading to first floor chamber can be seen to the left of image.



Photograph M: View of exposed roofing above workshop first floor chamber.

Note: The internal timber panelling backing the slate roofing. The roofing is in good repair and no access opportunities for bats or birds were recorded.



Survey Procedures & Limitations

Surveyor Experience

The survey was completed by Dr David Bell, Director, Sensible Ecological Survey Solutions Limited. Dr Bell has forty years experience as a professional ecologist and he has completed many similar protected species surveys at sites across North West England and the wider UK. He is a full and long standing 'Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management' (MCIEEM).

External/Internal Buildings Protected Species Survey Procedures & Limitations

The survey of the structure was completed on 29th July 2021.

The buildings were surveyed externally using binoculars, and internally within the residential roof chamber using a torch. Note: no invasive search for roosting bats was completed.

Survey Limitations: Good views could be had of all external buildings frontages and roofing. Internally access to the residential building loft chamber was obtained via a hatch fitted into the 2nd floor ceiling on the landing.

The surveys were completed within the optimal bat surveys season (May - September inclusive).

The surveys were completed within the bird breeding season (1st March - 31st August inclusive).

BAT RECORDS FOR THE AREA

The following species of bat have been recorded within a 5km radius of the site:

COMMON NAME	SPECIES NAME	STATUS
Common Pipistrelle Bat	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	widespread
Noctule Bat	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	scattered
Brown Long Eared Bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	scattered
Soprano Pipistrelle Bat	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	scattered
Daubenton's Bat	<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	rare

Given the nature of the target structures combined with the bat records for the area, the species of bat most likely to be present, should they be able to gain access, would be: Common Pipistrelle.

Survey Findings

BATS

No evidence of bat activity of any form was recorded in association with the surveyed buildings either externally or internally.

Close inspection of external building frontages, the floors of the workshop chambers and the floor of the residential building's roof chamber detected no bat droppings, staining etc. which would imply current or former bat occurrence.

Appraisal of the Buildings Potential to support Roosting Bats

Both buildings were assessed as having 'Negligible' potential to support roosting bats

(Negligible equates to "negligible features likely to be used by roosting bats" (Bat Conservation Trust (2016)).

THE RESIDENTIAL BUILDING

The following key features justify the negligible risk assessment:

The plastic sheet backing to the roof slates internally which is good repair and well sealed throughout thus eliminating any direct access opportunities into the loft chamber.

The fascia, barge boards and gable end mortar dry verging are all in good order and well sealed.

External rendering, including to the chimney stacks is in good condition with no significant loss or cracks recorded.

Windows, doors and vents are all in good condition and well sealed to surrounds.

THE WORKSHOP BUILDING

The good repair of the slate roofing and ridge tiles which are well sealed through with no potential bat access points detected.

External rendering is in good condition with no significant loss or cracks recorded.

The slate roofing is backed internally with wood panelling (Photograph M) which is well sealed, and no opening in the roofing or at roof/wall interfaces were recorded

Windows, doors and vents are all in good condition and well sealed to surrounds.

A number of examples of missing mortar to roof verges (Photograph K) did warrant special attention however on close inspection viable opportunities for bat entry were assessed as low and no evidence of bat entry was recorded.

As the risk to bats is assessed as negligible, Phase 2 bat surveys are not considered justified and are not recommended.

THE WIDER SITE

The surveyed buildings open directly onto Lodge Lane, a track which passes to the immediate south of the site (Figure 1). To the east of the residential building is found an area of amenity grassland with abandoned kennel structures to the site margin (Photograph N). The amenity grassland has negligible nature conservation value. A number of mature trees overhang the eastern site boundary (Photograph N), however the nearest foliage of the trees is approximately 8m away from the building; it is concluded there that the proposed demolition works will have a negligible impact on wildlife associated with the trees.

A large rear garden area extends northwards from the rear of the buildings (Photograph O). The rear garden is again largely amenity grassland with shrubs and trees to the margins. The gardens are currently unmanaged and are starting to be invaded by tall perennials and invasive weeds. There are no mature trees to the rear of the properties with a 10m radius.

It is concluded that there are currently no threats to wildlife and other nature conservation interest associated with the wider site.

Photograph N: View of garden and abandoned kennels to east of residential building.

Note: The mature trees immediately beyond the site boundary. The trees were assessed to have low bat roost potential and moderate breeding bird potential. As the trees are over 8m from the nearest frontage of the residential building, the risk to wildlife which may be associated with the trees is assessed as negligible.



Photograph Q: View of large rear garden to residential building.

Note: The garden is currently unmanaged; however amenity grassland remains dominant with scrubs and trees to the site boundaries.



SPECIALLY PROTECTED BIRDS

No evidence of usage of the buildings by specially protected bird species such as Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) was recorded. No access opportunities for barn owl into the buildings were recorded. The buildings are assessed as unsuitable and the risk negligible.

BREEDING BIRDS

No evidence of bird breeding activity was recorded in association with the surveyed buildings either externally or internally. No access opportunities for birds into the buildings were recorded.

The rear garden area with its numerous trees and small stands of scrub (Photograph O) can be expected to offer opportunities to a range of common passerine bird species for breeding, refuge & foraging. A targeted breeding bird survey was not completed, however the shrubs and trees are all more than 10m away and therefore the risk to breeding birds from the proposed demolition works is assessed as negligible.

If however wider site vegetation clearance is proposed then a breeding birds survey is recommended and should be completed by a suitably qualified person in advance of commencement of works.

Conclusions & Recommendations

BATS

No evidence of former or current usage of the surveyed buildings by bats was recorded.

The buildings are generally in good order and well sealed throughout, with no viable opportunities for bats to gain access detected.

The buildings were both assessed as having 'Negligible' potential to support roosting bats. The current risk to bats from the proposed demolition works is therefore assessed as negligible.

There are no further structures in close proximity to the target buildings assessed as having bat roost potential.

Mature trees located just beyond the eastern site boundary (**Photograph N**) were provisionally assessed to have 'Low' potential to support roosting bats, however the trees are over 8m away from the buildings and the risk of harmful disturbance is assessed as negligible. The trees within and around the site can however be expected to attract foraging bats.

The impact of the proposed works on the local bat population is assessed as negligible.

Phase 2 Bat surveys are not considered to be justified and are not recommended.

The findings of these bat surveys are valid for a maximum period of one year.

BIRDS

No evidence of usage of the two buildings by breeding birds was recorded, and the buildings were assessed as having 'Low' potential to support breeding birds.

The large rear garden area contains numerous trees and stands of scrub which can be expected to support a range of breeding passerine species. The completion of demolition and reconstruction works is not seen as a threat; however wider site clearance works, including vegetation removal, could present a significant risk to birds

It is recommended that if wider site clearance are to commence during the bird breeding season (1st March - 31st August in any year) then a check for nesting

activity should be completed by a suitably qualified person with 2 weeks of commencement of works. If active nests are detected then commencement of works should be delayed or alternatively a works standoff of at least 4m radius should be maintained if practical until abandonment of nest is confirmed.

References:

Bat Conservation Trust. (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists. (3rd Edition) Good Practice Guidelines. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

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August 2021

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