



WE KNOW SERVICES

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Report

Site

12 Church Street, Prescott

Client

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Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Report – 12 Church Street, Prescott



A view of the frontage of No.12 Church Street, Prescott.

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Summary

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats was commissioned in May 2022 of a property at number 12 Church Street, Prescott. The survey was commissioned to support a planning application for the proposed re-development of the building and bringing it back into use as a restaurant.

Following the scoping survey, no evidence to suggest the presence of bat roosts was identified in association with the building. The building was assessed to be of 'low potential' (Collin, J. (Ed), 2016) for supporting bat roosts.

In view of the assessment of "low potential" to support bat roosts in relation the building, but lack of any evidence of the presence of bat roost, the scale of impact upon the conservation status of the species in relation to the proposed works is potentially 'high' where a roost is assumed to be present and where works affecting the roof are undertaken during the 'active period' for bats (i.e. late April – late September when bats are most likely to occupy summer or transitional roost sites).

However, where works affecting the roof structure can be undertaken outside of this period (i.e., October – March) and the materials and PRFs present (naturally occurring gaps between roofing slates and roof edges) are retained whilst successfully improving the roof condition, then it is considered likely that disturbance to bats (if present) could be avoided, and the functionality of any roost (if present) maintained.

Mitigation and precautionary working measures are proposed with the aim of achieving the above.

In the event the proposed mitigation is considered achievable, basic precautionary working measures should be adopted to ensure the roof remains unaffected during the active period for bats and should a bat roost be present during this time, any potential disturbance avoided.

In the event that the above mitigation measure cannot be adopted and works are required to affect the roof of the building during the active period for bats, then further survey will be required in order for a full assessment to be made with respect to potential impacts upon bats as per current professional survey guidelines (Collins, J (ed) 2016).

In this event, it would be recommended that a minimum of a single dusk emergence survey is undertaken during the active season for bats (this can be undertaken from May - July) in order for the assessment to be completed with respect to the roof structure.

In addition to the above, it is recommended that where possible any proposed lighting scheme should be designed to ensure that it is sensitive to the presence of bats

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foraging and commuting in the vicinity of the site, and avoid illuminating any potential roost features, flight lines and foraging areas.

Nesting birds have not been identified as using the building for nesting during the breeding season. As such, no further recommendations for mitigation are made.

However, if at any stage of the works an active bird's nest is discovered, then works must be planned to avoid disturbance and destruction of any active nest present until the young have fledged and left the nest.

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1 Introduction

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats was commissioned in May 2022 of a property at number 12 Church Street, Prescott. The survey was commissioned to support a planning application for the proposed re-development of the building and bringing it back into use as a restaurant.

1.1 Site Description

The site is located on Church St, Prescott (Grid Reference: SJ46539274) and consists of a two storey (with additional attic area) building, which is situated at the end of a terrace. The site is in the urban area of Prescott with semi-natural habitat present in the locality limited to the a nearby cemetery and gardens to residential properties.

Figure 1. Site (redline) and surrounding landscape character



1.2 Proposed Works

It is understood that the proposals are for works in relation to the re-development of the building to bring back in to use as a restaurant.

1.3 Personnel & Quality Assurance

Rob Nicholson BSc (Hons) MCIEEM is a Class 2 Bat licence holder (Natural England), has over 10 years' relevant experience as an ecologist and is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Rob has been 'named ecologist' on numerous European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) for bats for a range of species and roost types in both England and Wales.

All field work and assessment was undertaken in accordance with current best practice guidelines (Collins, J. (Ed) 2016).

2 Legal Status

Bats

In England, all British bats and their roosts are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

These pieces of legislation combine to give substantial protection to bats and their roost sites, making it an offence to:

- *Deliberately or intentionally kill, injure or take a bat;*
- *Damage, destroy or intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection (this is taken to mean all bat roosts whether bats are present or not);*
- *Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.*

Birds

Breeding wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). All birds, their nests and eggs are protected and it is thus an offence, with certain exceptions to:

- *intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird;*
- *intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built;*
- *intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird;*

have in one's possession or control any wild bird, dead or alive, or any part of a wild bird, which has been taken in contravention of the Act or the Protection of Birds Act 1954;

Additionally, for some species listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb the adults while they are in and around their nest or intentionally or recklessly disturb their dependent young.

3 Methodology

The bat scoping survey (PRA) and desk-based assessment were conducted on the 30th May 2022.

3.1 Desk Study

To inform the survey, a desk study was conducted using available ecological information relating to bats for the area surrounding the site.

Online resources, including Multi-Agency Geographic Information Centre (MAGIC), were consulted in relation to the presence of sites and habitats of importance for bats in the wider context.

A data request to the Local Records Centre or the local Bat group was not made due to the small scale of the development.

3.2 Pre-development Bat Survey

Habitat Survey

A broad habitat survey was conducted of the site to inform the assessment of the suitability of the site for bats. Broad habitat descriptions were assigned and their values with respect to bats at site level and in the wider context assessed.

Bat Scoping Survey

The bat scoping survey comprises of a building inspection which was limited to the building subject of the planning application.

The building was inspected using close-focusing binoculars (Pentax Papilio 8.5 x 21) to determine possible access points such as cavities in brickwork and the roof structure. An internal inspection of all relevant rooms within the buildings was conducted where accessible. Using ladders, all accessible features were closely inspected using *Lenser H14* and X21 cool light torches. Where possible, any cracks, crevices and likely access points or potential roost features were checked for signs of use by bats e.g. droppings, scratch marks and staining. An endoscope was used to inspect cavities that could be accessed safely via ladders.

Other protected Species

A general assessment was made in relation to other protected or notable species (limited to nesting birds on this site) that may be affected by the proposed development, taking into consideration habitat present on site and in the wider area, existing ecological information/reports and the extent of the proposals.

3.3 Evaluation Methods

The 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines' (3rd edition) (Collins, J. (Ed) 2016) are used as a basis to evaluate the value of features for their potential to support bats. In addition, the Bat Mitigation Guidelines (Mitchell-Jones, 2004) was referred to. The potential impacts on bats, bat habitat or their roosts as a result of the proposals are assessed within this report using the above criteria, together with an ecological judgement by an experienced bat surveyor.

4 Constraints

Some features with potential for supporting bat roosts (e.g. roof tiles) could not be accessed for physical inspection due to the height and position at which they are located. As such, these features were limited to visual inspection from ground level using close-focussing binoculars to inspect for field signs of bats around the exterior of the cavities.

External field signs of bats can be lost over time due to weathering and damp conditions. Droppings and other field signs are not always visible through routine, non-invasive inspection surveys as bat species associated with buildings roost in crevices that may not be fully accessible to survey. This survey does not cover every month of the active and hibernation seasons.

5 Results

5.1 Desk Study

Online Resources

According to the Natural England online mapping resource MAGIC there are no statutory designated sites for which bats are a qualifying feature within 2 km of the site.

There are two granted European Protected Species Licences relating to bats within 2 km of the site as follows:

- 2017-28690-EPS-MIT-1 Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and Brown Long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*). Located 1.4km west. Dated 2017 – 2018
- 2018-38343-EPS-MIT Common Pipistrelle. Located 1.9km west. Dated 2019 – 2022

5.2 Field Survey

Broad Habitat Survey

The site is situated in urban area of Prescott which comprises of a mixture of historic and modern buildings, both commercial and residential. There is typical urban infrastructure including street lighting and highways present in the locality.

Foraging habitat in the immediate vicinity of the site is provided by a large church cemetery (<50m south-west of the site) along with urban streets, car parks and gardens.

Roost Survey

The objective of the roost survey was to identify and assess for the presence of bat roosts at any potential roost locations which may be anticipated to be affected by the proposed re-development works affecting the building.

Building Inspections

The building was subject of an internal and external inspection and assessment for the potential of the building to support bat roosts, and any evidence thereof.

Table.1 Building Inspection Results

Photo	Description
	The exterior of the building is of brick construction. The roof is pitched with an outer layer of slate. There is a main roof with a void and a secondary roof on an extension to the north of the building (see Photo 2). There is one main roof void above the main building (Photos 5 & 6). This is glazed to the eastern aspect and is therefore partially lit by daylight during the day. The western aspect is partially separated by a dividing wall so is therefore kept in darkness. The roof void is small but open internally (not cluttered) and the roof is underlined with bituminous felt. The ground floor and first floors house several rooms including former seating and kitchen areas of the former café, store
	



rooms, toilets, and living space to the upper levels. These rooms are glazed (allowing natural light during the day) and lack any notable internal potential roost features (PRFs).

There are no basement levels to the building.

The exterior of the roofing is generally in good condition but there are some lifted slates and natural gaps between slates, along with missing mortar at gable end roof edges which could potentially afford crevice dwelling bats access into the fabric of the roof (spaces between timber roof structure, felt and slates).

The external brick work and around window frames appear generally intact with no cavities observed that could be considered PRFs or allow access into the building.

Potential Roost Features:

Small number of potential access points/roost features, with potential to support bat roosts (likely crevice dwelling species only) associated with external



roof fabric and roof voids.

The building is not considered suitable for hibernation roosts as the PRFs are associated with the roof top which would be exposed to sunlight (varying degrees) and therefore lead to unstable environmental conditions, not suited to hibernation.

Evidence:

No evidence of the presence of bats throughout the building (external or internal).

Bat Roost Assessment:

Low potential for supporting bat roosts. Roof section of the building only.

There are no PRFs associated with the ground floor or first floor (externally or internally).

Note: No evidence of nesting birds was recorded in association with the building.



5.3 Roosts and Habitat

Following the scoping survey, no evidence to suggest the presence of bat roosts was identified in association with the building. The building was assessed to be of 'low potential' (Collin, J. (Ed), 2016) for supporting bat roosts overall due to the presence of a small number of potential roost features (PRFs) associated with the roof structure only, and due to the urban location, and presence of nearby artificial light sources. The site is not considered suitable for supporting hibernating bats.

5.4 The Value of the Site for Bats

In view of the results of the preliminary roost assessment the building is considered to currently have 'low potential' to support bat roosts during the active season only (May – September inclusive), associated with the roof structures only. The site is not considered suitable for supporting hibernating bats.

The site is in an urban location and does not contain particularly high-quality foraging habitat, though the nearby cemetery will provide such habitat. As such the site is considered to be of 'low value' for roosting bats in the local context (Mitchell-Jones, 2004) and unlikely to support any bat roost of higher significance (i.e.; breeding site or particularly rare or notable species).

Overall, there is an abundance of suitable buildings for roosting in the vicinity of the site, though artificial light sources (street lighting) and limited foraging habitat may reduce the potential suitability for bats.

5.5 Other protected Species

No evidence of nesting birds was recorded in association with the building with the survey undertaken during the breeding season when nesting behaviour or other field signs are mostly likely to be evident. In view of this, there is not considered to be any potential for the building to support nesting birds.

6 Impacts

The proposed development consists of the re-development of the building, bringing it back into use as a restaurant, within the existing site footprint. It is understood that works may include roofing works, which without mitigation has the potential to affect bat roosts, if present.

Bats

In view of the assessment of “low potential” to support bat roosts in relation the building, and lack of any evidence of the presence of bat roost, the scale of impact upon the conservation status of the species in relation to the proposed works is potentially ‘high’ where a roost is assumed to be present and where works affecting the roof are undertaken during the “active season” for bats (i.e.; late April – late September when bats are mostly likely to occupy summer or transitional roost sites).

However, where works affecting the roof structure can be undertaken outside of this period (i.e.; October – March) and the materials and PRFs present (naturally occurring gaps between roofing slates and roof edges) are retained whilst successfully improving the roof condition, then it is considered likely that potential disturbance to bats (if present) could be avoided, and the functionality of any roost (if present) maintained.

Other Protected Species

There is no evidence of nesting birds using the building as such, no impacts are anticipated.

Due to the scale and nature of the proposed development, it is not anticipated that there will be any significant impact upon other habitats or protected species.

7 Advice and Recommendations

It is advised that bats and their roosts are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

It is advised that it is illegal to deliberately/intentionally or recklessly: kill, injure or take a bat; damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection (this is taken to mean all bat roosts whether bats are present or not); and disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.

It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to damage, destroy or interfere with a bird's nest while it is in use (with eggs or dependent young).

7.1 Further Survey & Mitigation Measures

Bats

Where it is unlikely that roofing works could be undertaken with the previously described timing restrictions in place, then it would be necessary to carry out further survey to determine whether or not bats are present in association with the building prior to planning consent being permitted.

The presence of a bat roost in association with the roof structure can only be determined through further emergence surveys during the active season for bats (May – July inclusive). For buildings assessed as being of 'Low Potential' for supporting bat roosts, a single dusk emergence survey is required.

However, where works can avoid affecting the roof structure during the active season for bats and retain the existing roof materials and PRFs (access points for bats as described), then works should be able to commence without any need for further survey and without impact upon bats or their roosts (should they be present during the active season).

This is because the risk of disturbing bats will be avoided, and the functionality of the bat roost (if present) would be maintained and available again to bat in the following season (April onward).

In the event the above mitigation is considered achievable, basic precautionary working measures should be adopted to ensure the roof remains unaffected during the active season for bats, consequently, should a bat roost be present at that time, any potential disturbance avoided.

During the 'Active Season for Bats (late April – late September):

Works must avoid all aspects of the roof structure and internal roof voids.

Any scaffolding to be erected should ensure any potential access points for bats are not obscured or blocked. This includes blocking of eaves, and roof edges at gable ends.

A suitably qualified ecologist should be engaged when planning placement of scaffolding to ensure the potential presence of bat roosts associated with the roof is considered and scaffolding avoids affecting access points.

Prior to works commencing, once scaffolding is in place for external works, a suitably qualified ecologist should inspect the exterior of the building further, using the scaffolding to facilitate access to potential roost access points for detailed inspection.

Works must avoid significantly affecting internal ceilings on the first floor that abut the roof voids (i.e.; taking down ceilings or otherwise exposing the internal roof void).

During the 'Hibernation period' for Bats (October – March):

- Roofing works to take place during this period only.
- Traditional slate tiles and bituminous felt to be used (as per current materials).
- Naturally occurring gaps between slates (8-10mm sufficient) to be re-instated.
- Gaps along roof edges / eaves to be reinstated (8-10mm sufficient).
- Modern roofing membranes (i.e.; any plastic / non-bituminous felt) to be avoided.
- Ecologist to be consulted to confirm PRFs have been reinstated and correct materials used.

In the event that the above mitigation measures cannot be adopted and works are required to affect the roof of the building during the active period for bats, then further survey will be required in order for a full assessment to be made with respect to potential impacts upon bats.

In this event, it would be recommended that a minimum of a single dusk emergence survey is undertaken during the active season for bats (this can be undertaken from May – July) in order for the assessment to be completed with respect to the roof structure.

In addition to the above, it is recommended that where possible any proposed lighting scheme should be designed to ensure that it is sensitive to the presence of bats foraging and commuting in the vicinity of the site, and avoid illuminating any potential roost features, flight lines and foraging areas.

This would include low-level lighting or similar solutions to prevent artificial light levels from deterring bats from the site and surrounding area (please see *¹Bats and artificial lighting guidance note (2018)* for further information).

Birds

Nesting birds have not been identified as using the building for nesting during the breeding season. As such, no further recommendations for mitigation are made.

However, if at any stage of the works an active bird's nest is discovered, then works must be planned to avoid disturbance and destruction of any active nest present until the young have fledged and left the nest.

8 Conclusions

In view of the above, where the above recommendations are followed, it is considered the appropriate level of assessment will have been completed (as per Collin, J (Ed) 2016), and the conservation status of the bats will not be adversely affected by the proposed works.

9 References

Bat Conservation Trust (2000). *Distribution atlas of bats in Britain and Ireland 1980-1999*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Bat Conservation Trust website: <http://www.bats.org.uk/>

Collins, J (Ed). (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines*, 3rd edition. Bat Conservation Trust.

ILP (2018) Bats and artificial lighting guidance note.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature

Multi-Agency Geographic Information Centre: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>