Leigh Ecology Ltd
Protected Species and Habitat Surveys

The Oaks, 8 Hall Drive, Higher Marston, Northwich, Cheshire. CW9 6DT.

Barn/Outbuilding,
The Hollins,
Horton,
Leek.

On behalf of Mr Barnacle.

Report number: IA-003 Author: R. Leigh

Date: 1st November 2017 Approved: J. Leigh

Bat Report

Important Information to Readers

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The advice contained in this report is based on the information available and/or collected during the period of study. We cannot completely eliminate the possibility of important ecological features being found through further investigation and/or by survey at different times of the year or in different years.

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Contents

1 Summary

This report presents the findings of a bat survey in relation to the proposed conversion of an existing barn building to a dwelling, situated at The Hollins on behalf of Mr Barnacle. The aims of the study were to assess the likely presence of bats, which would constitute potential constraints to the proposed development.

The proposal site comprises a two-storey barn building. The building is constructed from single skin stone brick walls, all of which are in a reasonable state of repair. The roof is a traditional slate tile with lime cement lining, the roof is in good condition, the building has open door and window apertures allowing ingress of rain and wind. Internally, the barn is an open space with no internal structure; the area is open allowing access and inspection on the roof structure and internal walls.

The building contains a fireplace and chimney, which leads out to a grilled chimney pot.

The proposed development intends to convert the barn building into a dwelling.

A bat scoping survey is an external and internal search for signs of bat presence within the current building. The site survey was conducted on 24th October 2017 and followed BCT (2016) guidelines.

The building is set within a light commercial site, the surrounding landscape comprises largely of rural environment, with open farmland occurring in the immediate area.

No signs of bats were found within the barn, however barn swallow *Hirundo rustica* nests were noted within the building.

2 Introduction

Leigh Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Mr Barnacle to undertake a Bat Scoping survey on a barn building at The Hollins, Horton, in relation to a planning application.

The scope of this bat scoping survey is to identify any signs of bat presence and if confirmed recommend further surveys in accordance with the possible impact of the proposed works.

The objectives of the study were;

- To identify the presence or potential presence of any bat species or habitats;
- To identify any requirements for further ecological survey work.

2.1 Legislative Framework

Protected species are referred to in The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, with a general reference to certain plants, animals and wild birds all being protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This emphasises that, regardless of any planning policy or guidelines, certain species are legally protected and any type of development that would injure, kill, ill-treat, intentionally damage or destroy any protected species or place of shelter would be a criminal act. The Act was further strengthened in 2000 by the introduction of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000.

Species of European importance receive additional protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

Any development which may have an impact upon the integrity of a statutory designated site for nature conservation purposes is also subject to the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Habitat Regulations, in particular Regulations 48 and 49 of the latter, where an Appropriate Assessment may be required in order for a Competent Authority to determine this impact, both from the proposed scheme and in combination with any other schemes.

Councils also have a statutory obligation under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 to make material consideration to biodiversity conservation in the determination of all types of planning applications. Planners therefore require relevant information from wildlife surveys and details on proposed mitigation for priority species and

habitats (as well as for legally protected species) in order to assess the effects on biodiversity of a proposed development.

In 2007, the UK list of conservation priority species and habitats was fully revised taking into account emerging priorities, conservation successes and information gathered in the past decade. The list now contains 1149 species and 65 habitats that have been listed as priorities for conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP). The framework for conserving biodiversity is laid out in a 'Conserving Biodiversity - The UK Approach' (Defra 2007), which aims to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010.

As part of the action plan process, Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) were also produced for every county in the UK, although other public bodies may also produce them. These LBAPs highlight local biodiversity issues, with specific action plans being implemented for priority habitats and species where they occur. The relevant scheme for the proposed development is the Staffordshire LBAP.

With legal responsibilities and planning implications it is therefore important that any ecological assessment of a proposed development site addresses the possibility of protected species being present within or around the site, along with any potential impacts of the proposed scheme on statutory designated sites.

Without such an assessment, a developer is unable to demonstrate due diligence in its responsibilities, with reference to both the legal protection and the possible information required in support of the planning application. It would, however, be unreasonable for an ecological assessment to survey for every protected species. Any such assessment should therefore be based upon the results of a habitat survey and the associated possibility or likelihood of protected species being present.

This study therefore seeks to establish the potential for protected species (bats) on the site and makes recommendations for further surveys to establish the presence or likely absence of any protected species, or the potential effects of the proposed scheme on statutory sites designated for nature conservation purposes.

3 Methodology

3.1 Building Surveys

The bat scoping survey was undertaken on 24th October 2017 by Roy Leigh ACIEEM a licensed bat surveyor No 2015-15883-CLS-CLS. Mr Leigh is a long-term member of the Cheshire and Gwynedd Bat Groups.

The bat scoping survey-employed methodology based-upon that outlined in the '*Good Practice Guidelines'* (BCT, 2016) whereby all potential bat habitats within the proposed development are surveyed for signs of bat presence.

4 Results

4.1 Building Survey

4.1.1 Building Description

The proposal building is a partial two-storey barn, the building is constructed from stone block external walls and a slate tiled pitched roof, a small piggery/single storey extension slopes down from the rear wall, this area is in a state of disrepair as the roof is in a state of partial collapse.

The walls and roof of the main building are in a reasonable condition; the door and window apertures are open to the outside elements allowing ingress of rain and wind.

The underside of the roof was open tiles and wooden latts, the roof has no lining, allowing the roof open to examination.

Internally, the barn is split into a large open room and a small low ceiling piggery/animal holding pen and low height walls, the building is in partial collapse, the wooden beam support structure is broken and is damp from the ingress of rain.

Internally and externally the main building has been maintained and pointed with cement mortar.

The building is currently empty.

Plate 1. The barn building set in a farmyard/commercial environment, the building is isolated, with no bat foraging or commuting habitat adjacent to the barn.

Plate 2. The single storey piggery leads from the rear wall of the barn, it is in a state of disrepair, with large holes occurring in the roof and walls, allowing wind and rain to enter the area.

Plate 3. The underside of the roof is open and visible for inspection.

4.1.2 Bats

The proposed application area and adjacent land is suitable for foraging and commuting bats.

Externally the target building demonstrated poor bat roost potential (see plates 1,2 and 3).

The building was checked for signs of bat usage following Bat Conservation Trust Guidance (2016) in order to ensure that the initial assessment was robust.

The building was internally and externally checked using a high-powered flashlight, endoscope and binoculars. No droppings, oil stains, dead bats, scratch marks or any other signs of bat presence were recorded in the building during the survey.

Plate 4. The underside of the roof which is supported by a beam and latt structure is open for inspection, the main beams are tightly fitted to the walls, some small gaps were checked using an endoscope, no signs of bats were found.

Plate 5 The external walls were mainly well pointed which sealed the gaps, however some gaps did occur, as above, these were examined closely with an endoscope which allows close observation. No signs of bat presence or usage were found.

Plate 6 As mentioned in plate 5 the vast majority of the external brickwork was pointed, with cement mortar which creates shallow joins, which doesn't provide a sheltered roost habitat.

Plate 7 The internal walls are well sealed with cement mortar providing little in the way of bat roost habitat.

Plate 8 The building internally had a fireplace, and chimney, the area was checked via endoscope, up to the 2m reach of the probe.

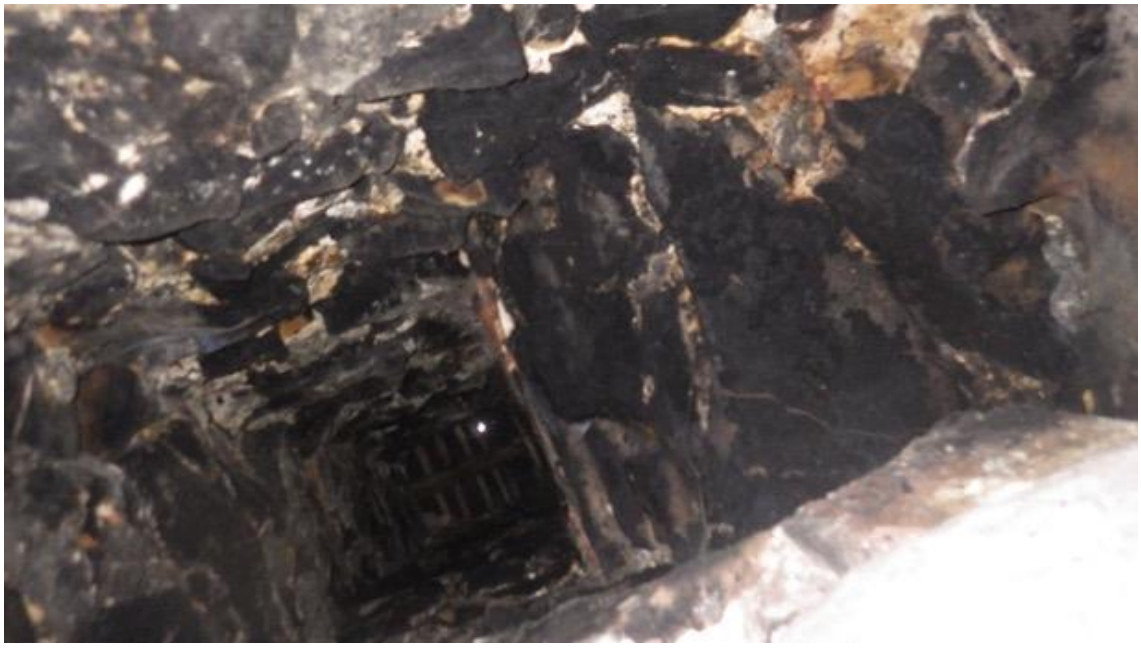

Plate 9 The chimney as viewed from the hearth, is well sealed, and is capped at the top of the pot.

Plate 10 A barn swallow nest was recorded on a roof beam in a building, this looked to have been used during the last breeding season give the level and state of droppings.

5 Discussion

The proposed development area comprises a single storey detached barn building set on a farmyard/ commercial environment.

No signs of bats were recorded during the survey following a comprehensive survey. Although signs of barn swallow nesting activity were found within the main barn building.

The building offers negligible bat roost habitat; this may be related to the open doors and windows, as this allows the rain and wind to enter the building therefore affecting the micro climate bats require within their roost environment.

However, some cracks and crevices were located within the building and external walls, these may be used in an infrequent basis as a temporary roost during foraging activity. Therefore it is suggested that prior to the works commencing, the construction operatives are given a bat safeguard toolbox talk as provided in appendix 1 of this document.

Given that barn swallow nesting activity (nest and droppings) was located within the barn it is suggested that a number (3 suggested) species specific nest boxes, as shown below, are erected on the wider site, in a location that allows free access for the birds.

Swallow nest box suggested as mitigation.

Additionally, if works are being undertaken within the bird-nesting season (April-End August), given the dynamic nature of bird colonisation, a bird nest check should be undertaken by a suitably experienced ecologist prior to the commencement of works.

6 References

Bat Conservation Trust (2016). *Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Appendix 1

Bat Safeguard Method Statement – Toolbox Talk

This document provides the procedure to safeguard any bat species that may be found roosting in roof voids, during the demolition and the refurbishment works.

Although no bats have been recorded roosting within the proposed development site, reasonable avoidance measures will be employed in order to ensure that no bats or roost sites will be harmed unknowingly during the works.

Bats are highly protected by law under the EC Habitats Directive when determining a planning application, as prescribed by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Therefore, the wilful destruction of a roost or any action causing harm to bats can result in a large fine or imprisonment.

Bats mainly roost in the roof and upper wall cavities of buildings. They can fit into surprisingly small cavities and gaps between roof tiles and lining fabric.

- **Therefore it is important that during the dismantling process the roof and the upper walls are hand stripped, with a high level of care and diligence;**

- **The initial works will be supervised by a suitably licenced and experienced ecologist;**

- **If a bat is found during the dismantling process ALL WORK MUST STOP;**

- **Call in a qualified and licenced bat ecologist;**

- **The bat ecologist will assess the situation and transfer the bat to a safe location nearby;**

- **The bat ecologist will then discuss the situation with Natural England in order to agree a way forward.**