

ST JOHN'S SCHOOL, WETLEY ROCKS.

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BAT SURVEY REPORT.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. Planning consent has been granted to convert the St John's School, Wetley Rocks into three dwellings. Bat surveys were carried out in 2015 in support of that planning consent.

1.2. Condition 3 of the planning consent states that "no development shall take place until a detailed method statement including details of the sequence and timings of work to ensure appropriate safeguard for bats together with drawings at a 1:20 scale to show the incorporation of bat roost features including an interior bat roost loft space have been submitted to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for approval, accompanied either by a licence issued by Natural England pursuant to Regulation 53 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 authorising the works to go ahead or a statement in writing from Natural England that it does not consider that the specified development will require a bat licence. The development shall then be implemented in accordance with the details as approved by the LPA and licences (or exempted from the need for a licence) by Natural England".

1.3. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd has been commissioned to satisfy that planning condition and to undertake the necessary site surveys.

1.4. An initial day time and dusk emergence survey was carried out 9th September 2018 and a dawn survey on 19th September 2018 to supplement and bring up to date the previous bat surveys.

1.5. Appendices I and II of this report provides additional information on various species and the protection afforded to them and are designed to assist the reader in understanding the contents of this report.

2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.

2.1. The buildings were thoroughly checked internally and externally for potential bat roosting sites by looking for the following signs:

- * Holes, cracks or crevices.
- * Bat droppings.
- * Prey remains.
- * Staining on external walls.

2.2. Unless otherwise stated, all lofts were accessed and inspected using a high-powered torch and where necessary an endoscope.

2.3. A thorough external inspection was carried out from ground level for any gaps or openings in the roof and ridge tiles, behind soffits and fascias and in the walls of the structure for suitable roost access points and field signs to indicate possible use by bats.

2.4. All window cills, walls and the ground around the structure were checked for signs of bat droppings or staining to indicate possible use by bats. Where necessary, ladders were utilised to gain access within the limits of health and safety. Any access constraints encountered are outlined within the following report.

2.5. All survey work was carried out in line with Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition),* with an assessment of the buildings suitability for roosting bats made in accordance with these guidelines.

2.6. The subsequent dusk emergence survey was also conducted in accordance with Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3^{rd} edition).* It was conducted by a sufficient number of surveyors to cover all areas of roosting potential, in suitable weather conditions from fifteen minutes before sunset to at least an hour and half after.

2.7. The survey was undertaken by a team from Whitcher Wildlife Ltd led by Derek Whitcher who has over twenty years' experience of surveying for wildlife and has run his own wildlife consultancy since 1998. He has extensive experience of a wide variety of survey techniques for a variety of species of protected wildlife supplemented by attendance on a wide range of training courses through CIEEM, FSC and BCT. As a member of CIEEM he is committed to continuous professional development, a continual process of learning and career development, a condition of CIEEM membership. He holds current Natural England survey licences for barn owl, bat, great crested newt and white clawed crayfish

3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Previous Bat Survey Results.

3.1.1. An initial day time inspection survey was carried out on 10th August 2015. No bat field signs were identified externally but likely entry and exit points were observed. Bat droppings and a concentration of butterfly wings were found in three places inside the building.

- Six Pipistrelle droppings were found in the bathroom close to a hole in a rotten window frame.
- Three old bat droppings were found on the landing between the ground floor and the lower attic along with three yellow underwing moth wings.
- Twelve Brown long-eared bat droppings were found in the lower attic along with butterfly and moth wings underneath a metal pipe connecting the two attics, thought to represent a feeding roost.
- A further twenty plus moth wings were found on loose loft insulation in the attic and scattered Brown long-eared bat droppings were found in the loft space.

3.1.2. An initial dusk emergence survey was carried out by three surveyors on 15th August 2015. The weather conditions were suitable for the survey. No bats were seen to leave or enter the building although it was deemed possible there was a Common Pipistrelle roost on the central part of the schoolhouse. During the survey, Common Pipistrelles and Brown long-eared bats were present north of the buildings.

3.1.3. A second dusk emergence survey was carried out by four surveyors on 18th August 2015 in suitable weather conditions. Seven Common Pipistrelles emerged from the roof of the school building or the schoolhouse. These roofs are connected and it is hard to differentiate between the two. On balance it was concluded that the bats emerged as shown below.



3.1.4. A dawn survey was carried out by three surveyors on the morning of 28th August 2015. The weather conditions were suitable if a little cool. No bats entered roosts in the school buildings.

3.1.5. Overall, it was concluded that:

- The school lofts are used on an occasional basis as a Brown long-eared bat feeding perch.
- There is a small Common Pipistrelle roost either beneath the ridge tiles near the dormer window on the eastern side of the school or in the roof of the schoolhouse.

3.2. Data Search Results.

3.2.1. The following map resulted from a data search carried out with Staffordshire Ecological Records Office in support of the 2015 survey.



3.2.2. The records show Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelles, Daubentons and Brown long-eared bats have all been recorded within 2km of the site but there are no roost records close to the site. The closest record was for a bat seen in a wood 400m from the site.

3.2. Site Description.

3.2.1. The site comprises a school and schoolhouse on Mill Lane, Wetley Rocks. The site is shown by the red arrow on the aerial photograph below. This shows the site is in a small residential area with the church and churchyard to the immediate east with arable and grazing farmland surrounding the area.



3.2.2. There are few connected flight lines across the surrounding area and it is therefore assessed to be low value bat foraging habitat.

3.2.3. The aerial photograph below shows the site with the school and the schoolhouse connected to the southwest corner of the school. The church and churchyard are to the east.



3.3. Daytime Survey Results.

For the purposes of the report, the buildings on site have been broken down and labeled separately. Each building will be described in detail below along with day time bat survey results.

3.3.1. The School.

3.3.1.1. The school is a traditional village school constructed with coursed stone walls and a pitched, slate covered roof. The photograph below shows the southern aspect onto Mill Lane.



3.3.1.2. The building is single storey with traditional high ceilings for the school hall and classrooms. There is a central dormer window on either side of the building. Most of the windows are boarded up.



3.3.1.3. The back of the school is a large window that has not been boarded up.



3.3.1.4. There is a narrow strip of land down the western side of the site with portable cabins along the boundary. There are also lean-to extensions that are in a poor state of repair, particularly the roofs.



3.3.1.5. The roof around the back of the schoolhouse is in a poor state of repair with slipped and loose slates as can be seen below. The school inside is very damp and the parquet floors are distorted and buckled due to the ingress of water.



3.3.1.6. Inside the building there is a central landing accessed by a ladder. From the landing, two attics can be seen leading off in either direction, to the front and back of the school. The upper attic is the original loft area above the original school rooms. These have been underdrawn with a suspended ceiling and this has created the second, lower attic space. The photograph below shows the lower attic above the suspended ceiling with a boarded walkway for access.



3.3.1.7. Above the original ceiling there is the upper attic, as shown in the photograph below. The underside of the slates is lined with an old bitumastic felt that is deteriorated and ripped.



3.3.1.8. During the day time survey a bat was seen flying within the upper attic space and bat droppings were found on the floor.



3.3.1.9. The School building was therefore assessed to have a **high** potential for small numbers of roosting bats.

3.3.2. The Schoolhouse.

3.3.2.1. The schoolhouse is a two storey dwelling house connected to the school building. It is a two storey building with coursed stone walls and a pitched, slate covered roof.



3.3.2.2. The walls are in a good condition although the window frames are rotten providing gaps for bats to access the building.

3.3.2.3. There are slipped and missing roof slates although the valley between the house and the school roof is impossible to see from ground level.

3.3.2.4. Inside the house the top floor rooms extend into the roof space leaving a very low loft space. This loft space was totally inaccessible with no loft hatch anywhere in the ceilings.



3.3.2.5. The schoolhouse building is assessed to have a **medium** potential for roosting bats.

3.4. Dusk Emergence Survey Results – 9th September 2018.

3.4.1. Four surveyors from Whitcher Wildlife Ltd carried out a dusk emergence survey on the evening of 9th September 2018. Two of the surveyors hold existing Natural England Class Licences for surveying bats and the remaining two surveyors are experienced assistants.

3.4.2. All surveyors were equipped with Batbox Duet detectors and two-way radios. Six Anabat recorders were deployed around the site to record bat activity for subsequent computer analysis using Analook software and two video cameras fitted with infra-red lights and Night Sight were set up inside the building to record bat activity.

3.4.3. The aerial photograph below shows where the Surveyors (S), Anabats (A) and Cameras (C) were positioned. Those Anabats in a blue text box were inside the buildings while those in a red text box were outside.



3.4.4. The evening was overcast and mild with a temperature of 14°C at 19:30 and a light wind. Sunset was at 19:37.

3.4.5. The following are the observations of the surveyors.

3.4.5.1. Surveyor 1.

19:54. Common Pipistrelle emerged from the north gable end wall of the schoolhouse and flew south.

20:08. Common Pipistrelle foraging from the west.

20:08. Myotis emerged from the ridge above the dormer window and school and flew northeast.

20:15. Common Pipistrelle emerged from roof between the school and the schoolhouse and flew east.

20:16. Myotis emerged from the top of the dormer window and flew northeast.

20:16. Common Pipistrelle from the west and flew around the south end of the school.

20:18. Myotis emerged from the roof above the dormer window and flew northeast.

20:22. Common Pipistrelle heard foraging, not seen.

20:26. Common Pipistrelle emerged from the roof between the house and school and went north.

20:28. Common Pipistrelle heard not seen.20:31. Quiet bat passed overhead.

Anabat 7 with Surveyor 1 recorded twenty-nine Common Pipistrelle calls between 20:09 and 20:46 and one Myotis at 20:18.

3.4.5.2. Surveyor 2.

19:47. Common Pipistrelle from east to west north of school and back.
19:57. Common Pipistrelle from the west over the church and foraged over churchyard.
19:59. Common Pipistrelle continually foraging over churchyard.
20:10. Common Pipistrelle over school roof, went east.
20:15. Common Pipistrelle over school roof and went east.
20:16. Common Pipistrelles still foraging over churchyard.

Anabat 4 with Surveyor 2 recorded seventy-five Common Pipistrelle calls between 19:47 and 20:44 and four Myotis calls between 20:10 and 20:16.

3.4.5.3. Surveyor 3.

19:47. Common Pipistrelle passed north to south between church and school.
19:57. Common Pipistrelle foraging between church and school all survey.
19:59. Common Pipistrelle west to east over school roof near dormer.
20:07. Common Pipistrelle west to east over school roof near dormer.
20:09. Common Pipistrelle west to east over school roof near dormer.
20:10. Common Pipistrelle west to east over school roof near dormer.
20:15. Common Pipistrelle west to east over school roof near dormer.
20:15. Common Pipistrelle west to east over school roof near dormer.
20:17. Quiet bat emerged from over the eastern dormer window.
20:25. Common Pipistrelle passed NE to SW over school building.

Anabat 8 with Surveyor 3 recorded one hundred and fifty-eight Common Pipistrelle calls between 19:47 and 20:45.

3.4.5.4. Surveyor 4.

20:06. Common Pipistrelle heard not seen from direction of churchyard.20:12. Common Pipistrelle heard not seen.

20:19. Common Pipistrelle from the north over the buildings, circled and foraged over trees to the west.20:25. Common Pipistrelle round from churchyard.20:28. Common Pipistrelle heard not seen.

20:30. Common Pipistrelle from the houses to the south and away east.

20:33 Common Pipistrelle heard not seen.

Anabat 10 with Surveyor 4 recorded twenty-six Common Pipistrelle calls between 19:47 and 20:45.

3.4.5.5. Anabat 5 looking south in the school loft recorded no bat activity.

3.4.5.6. Anabat 6 looking north in the school loft recorded one Brown long-eared bat at 18:56.

3.4.6. The video cameras recorded one bat flying in the upper loft space but did not show where it emerged from the building.

3.4.7. Summary of the Dusk Emergence Survey Results.

3.4.7.1. Seven bats emerged from the buildings of which three were Common Pipistrelles, three were Whiskered/Brandt's bats and one was a quiet bat thought to be the Brown long-eared bat seen on the video camera in the loft and recorded early on one of the loft Anabats.

3.4.7.2 The majority of the activity recorded on the site was Common Pipistrelle foraging particularly around the church and churchyard.

3.5. Dawn Survey Results – 19th September 2018.

3.5.1. Three surveyors from Whitcher Wildlife Ltd carried out a dusk emergence survey on the morning of 19th September 2018. All of the surveyors hold existing Natural England Class Licences for surveying bats.

3.5.2. All surveyors were equipped with Batbox Duet detectors and two-way radios. Five Anabat recorders were deployed around the site to record bat activity for subsequent computer analysis using Analook software and two video cameras fitted with infra-red lights and Night Sight were set up inside the building to record bat activity.

3.5.3. The aerial photograph below shows where the Surveyors (S), Anabats (A) and Cameras (C) were positioned. Those Anabats in a blue text box were inside the buildings while those in a red text box were outside.



3.5.4. The morning was overcast and mild with a temperature of 14°C at 05:00 and a light wind to Beauforth scale 2. Sunrise was at 06:47.

3.5.5. The following are the observations of the surveyors.

3.5.5.1. Surveyor 1.

05:36. Common Pipistrelle heard not seen.
05:40. Common Pipistrelle heard not seen.
05:43. Bat flew over building from the east, circled and left unseen.
05:44. Common Pipistrelle foraged briefly, unseen.
05:46. Common Pipistrelle passed north to south over buildings.
05:48. Myotis circling round NW of building, then flew south.
05:52. Myotis, from the east over the roof, circled and flew south.
05:55. Common Pipistrelle heard not seen.

05:58. Myotis from the east flew north.

05:58. Common Pipistrelle from the east and flew north.

05:59. Myotis flew south along the ridge and then north.

06:06. Three Myotis swarming around the dormer roof, two entered.

06:13. Myotis swarming round dormer, entered on south side.

Anabat 6 with Surveyor 1 recorded four Common Pipistrelles between 05:44 and 05:55 and thirty Myotis calls between 05:45 and 06:15.

3.5.5.2. Surveyor 2.

05:35. Common Pipistrelle heard not seen.

05:38. Distant Common Pipistrelle heard not seen.

05:40. Common Pipistrelle heard passing not seen.

05:44. Common Pipistrelle heard passing not seen.

05:52. Myotis circling dormer window.

05:55. Common Pipistrelle north to southwest over school.

05:58. Myotis passed north to south along the ridge.

05:58. Myotis passed north to south along the ridge.

05:59. Myotis passed north to south along the ridge.

06:01. Common Pipistrelle heard not seen.

06:04. Myotis circling round dormer window and roof.

06:06. Three Myotis bats circling over ridge line and roof.

06:11. Myotis swarming over roof and ridge line.

06:13. Common Pipistrelle heard not seen.

06:14. Common Pipistrelle circling north end of building, flew north.

06:15. Common Pipistrelle briefly heard not seen.

Anabat 3 with Surveyor 2 recorded fourteen Common Pipistrelle calls between05:35 and 06:15 and eleven Myotis calls between 05:37 and 06:08.

3.5.5.3. Surveyor 3.

05:40. Common Pipistrelle and social calls heard not seen.

05:46. Faint Common Pipistrelle heard not seen.

06:00 Quiet bat seen circling over the valley between house and school.

As all was quiet at the south end of the school, Surveyor 3 moved to the west of the school to assist Surveyor 1 and saw three myotis bats swarm around the dormer window and enter roosts. Anabat 1 remained at the south end of the school. Anabat 1 recorded three Common Pipistrelle calls between 05:40 and 05:55.

3.5.5.4. Anabat 5 inside the school loft recorded no bat activity.

3.5.5.5. Anabat 7 inside the school loft recorded no bat activity.

3.5.6. The camera in the loft facing north recorded one bat enter the loft from the east and fly up and down before roosting. The screenshots below show this bat flying in the loft. The long ears can clearly be seen.





3.5.7. Summary of the Dawn Survey Results.

3.5.7.1. Three Myotis bats swarmed around the roof of the school and eventually entered roosts in the top of the dormer window on the west side of the school.



3.5.7.2 The majority of the activity recorded on the site was Myotis bats swarming around the school roof and Common Pipistrelles foraging in the general area.3.5.7.3. Analysis of the Anabat recordings showed the Myotis bats to be Whiskered/Brandt's bats.

3.5.7.4. One brown long eared bat entered the roost in the loft of the school building and flew up and down before roosting.

3.5.7.5. None of the Common Pipistrelles that emerged during the dusk emergence survey were seen to return to their roost during the dawn survey.

4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. The data search results included no roost records for the school buildings or the immediate surrounds. Therefore, the conversion of the school buildings to residential use will not impact on such roosts.

4.2. Previous bat surveys of the school buildings were carried out during 2015 and these identified up to a maximum of seven Common Pipistrelles emerging from various places in the roofs of the school and schoolhouse. Previous surveys also identified Brown long-eared bat droppings and moth wings in the loft and interpreted this as a feeding perch.

4.3. During the day time inspection survey of the school building carried out in 2018, one Brown long-eared bat was identified flying in the loft spaces.

4.4. During the 2018 dusk emergence survey: -

- One Brown long-eared bat was seen on the video camera in the loft and was recorded on the Anabat recorder placed in the loft. This was possibly the bat seen emerging from the eastern dormer window at 20:17. This raises the category of the roost present in the old school to a Brown long-eared bat day roost.
- Two Common Pipistrelles emerged from various locations in the roof of the two buildings, with one emerging from the northern gable end wall of the school house. These are all Common Pipistrelle day roosts intermittently used by a small number of male bats.
- Three Whiskered/Brandt's bats emerged from the roof around the top of the west facing dormer roof. This represents a Whiskered/Brandt's bat day roost.
- 4.5. During the 2018 dawn survey: -
 - One Brown long-eared bat was seen on the video camera in the loft entering from the east side, but this was not recorded on the Anabat recorder placed in the loft. (Typical of Brown long-eared bats, which have very quiet echolocation calls.) This bat was seen to enter the roost from the eastern

dormer window and fly up and down the loft before roosting. This confirms the roost category of Brown long-eared bat day roost.

- Three Whiskered/Brandt's bats swarmed around the roof of the school and entered a roost in the top of the dormer window on the west side of the school. This confirms the presence of a Whiskered/Brandt's bat day roost.
- No Common Pipistrelles entered any roosts in the building during the dawn surveys. This is typical of a Common Pipistrelle day roost that is intermittently used.

4.6. The Common Pipistrelles and Whiskered/Brandt's bats are crevice dwelling bats that roost between the many loose and missing slates and the bitumastic felt lining. The conditions in these locations will vary and be draughty and damp. These conditions are assessed to be unsuitable for a maternity roost.

4.7. The loft space is too shallow to be a typical Brown long eared bat roost site but as there is access through holes in the ceilings it may be that they light sample throughout the entire building. Provision of a suitable loft space in the converted buildings will provide opportunities for a much larger roost that identified.

4.8. Development of the school buildings without a Natural England European Protected Species Licence would have a major impact on the bats and would be an offence.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. Because Common Pipistrelle, Whiskered/Brandt's and Brown long-eared bat day roosts have been identified in school buildings, it will be necessary to apply for and be granted a Natural England EPS licence before works can commence.

5.2. The bat surveys undertaken have been spread out over a period of time with some undertaken in 2015 and others in 2018. However, five surveys have now been completed and the results largely agree although the Whiskered/Brandt's bats were not identified in the 2015 surveys, so these may have started roosting since that time.

5.3. It is recommended that works commence on a Natural England bat licence application as soon as possible considering the present time scales.

5.4. It will be necessary to provide one Brown long-eared bat roost. Brown long-eared bats roost in loft spaces. They require a loft with a floor size of at least 5m by 6m and a height of 2.75m to the underside of the ridge. The roof trusses must be traditional in order to provide sufficient uncluttered space for the bats to fly around and light sample before emerging. A suitable location for such a roost needs to be agreed.

5.5. Common Pipistrelle and Whiskered/Brandt's roosts can be easily provided by incorporating an integral bat brick in the outer wall of the development. The back wall of the existing schoolhouse would be a good location as that wall is brick and also within the new houses to be built on the site. A typical bat brick is as shown below.



5.6. Alternatively, or additionally, the bat tube shown below can be built into a stone wall and faced with stone to provide roosting opportunities in stone walls.



5.7. We need the bat licence survey numbers for at least one of the ecologists that undertook the 2015 surveys.

5.8. We would need a copy of the plans of the proposed development of the school and schoolhouse.

5.9. This report is designed for in house consumption only. We will modify it before submitting a copy to Natural England in support of a licence application.

Prepared by:	
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Checked by:	
Steven Whitcher, MCIEEM.	Date: 21 st September 2018.

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Appendix I. BAT INFORMATION.

It is necessary to understand a little about bats, their basic nature, ecology and legal protection in order to evaluate the findings of this report.

18 species of bat currently reside in Britain, 17 of which are known to breed here. They are extremely difficult to identify in the hand and even more so in flight.

All appear to be diminishing in numbers, probably due to shortage of food, caused by pesticides, as insects are their sole diet, and habitat change.

As their diet consists solely of insects, bats hibernate during the winter when their food source is at its most scarce. They will spend the winter in hollow trees, caves, mines and the roofs of buildings.

Certain species, particularly the pipistrelle (the commonest and most widespread British bat) can quickly adapt to manmade structures and will readily use these to roost and to rear their young.

Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Regulation 41 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, and the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000.

It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture or disturb bats or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter or protection.

A breeding or resting site of any bat is known as a bat roost. A bat roost is therefore any structure a bat uses for shelter or protection. Because bats tend to use the same roosts each year, legal opinion is that the roost site is protected whether or not the bats are present at that time.

Bat roosts can be identified by looking for: -

- Suitable holes, cracks and crevices.
- Bat droppings.
- Prey remains.
- By carrying out night observations using a bat detector.

Where development proposals are likely to affect a bat roost site, a licence is required from Natural England.

The person applying for that licence has to be suitably qualified and experienced in bat matters. That person is then responsible for ensuring that the measures contained in the licence are carried out.

Appendix II. NESTING BIRD INFORMATION.

Ecology

The nesting season will vary according to the weather each year but generally commences in March, peaks during May and June and continues until September. It is also worth remembering that some birds nest in trees and scrub, but others are ground nesting or prefer man- made structures or buildings.

Surveys

Nesting bird surveys search for potential nest sites in vegetation, buildings etc. Potential nesting sites are observed over a suitable period of time for bird movements or calling male birds that would indicate the presence of a nest. The presence of a nest can be identified from the field signs without the necessity to see the nest itself, thereby avoiding any disturbance of the nests. The best way to avoid this issue is to plan for vegetation clearance to be carried out outside the bird-nesting season.

Legislation

Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Part 1. -(1) Of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - kills, injures or takes any wild bird; takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird, he shall be guilty of an offence.

Part 1. -(5) of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - disturbs any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young; or disturbs young of such a bird, he shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a special penalty.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 amends the above by inserting after "intentionally" the words "or recklessly".