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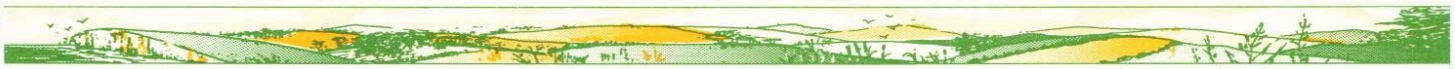

SPECIALISTS IN: HABITAT AND SPECIES SURVEY ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING AND ADVICE

Preliminary Roost Assessment and Survey for Evidence of Nesting Wild Birds

of a Farm Building, Longhurst Farm, Cheadle, Staffs

July 2020

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1 Introduction

With regard to the proposal to convert a stone barn in Dimmingsdale near Cheadle for residential use, ECO TECH Ecological Consultancy was commissioned to undertake surveys in relation to bats and wild birds in order to assess potential impact on these species groups.

This report provides details of the method, results and conclusions of the survey.

2 Survey Methodology

2.1 Method

General
The location of the building subject to survey and its immediate surrounds is shown on Map 1 below. It is located at National Grid Reference SK0482543832.

Bats
On the 10th July 2020, the building was subject to a preliminary roost assessment, including search for droppings and other signs of bat use (such as corpses or skeletons, oily marks from fur, and feeding remains). Binoculars, a high power torch and an endoscope were used as required.

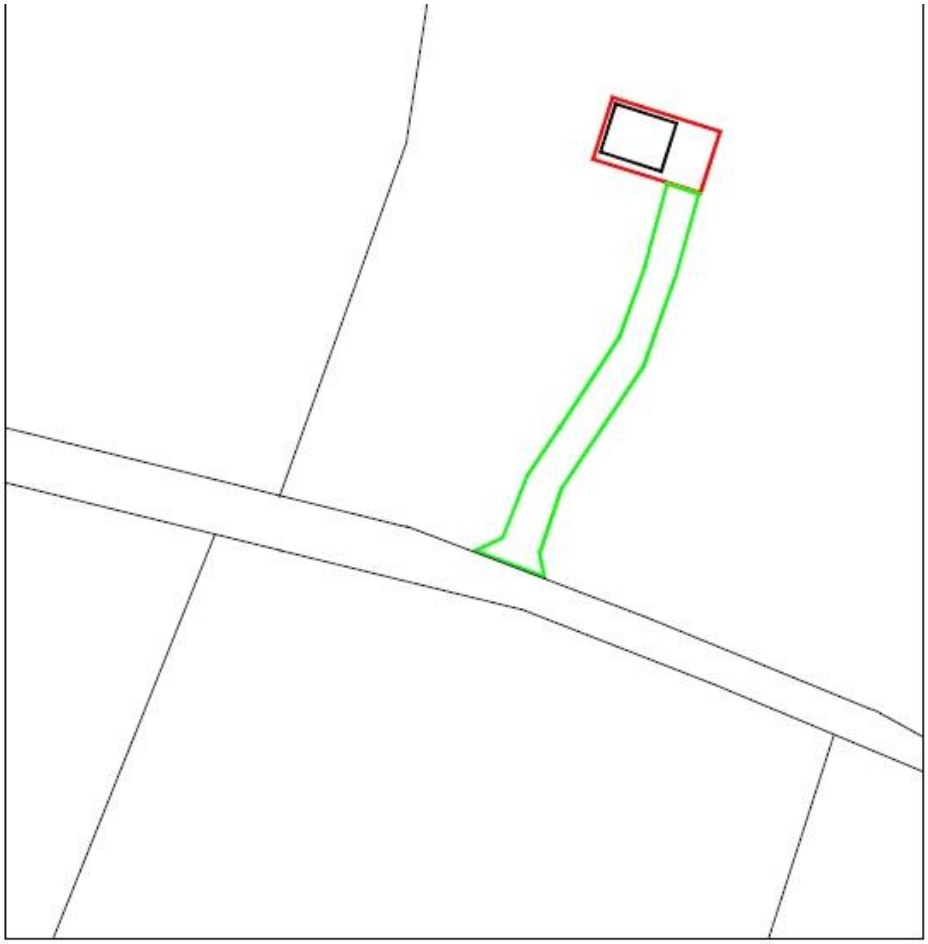
The surveyor was Rob Mileto who has over 25 years of experience of bat survey.

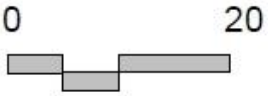
The survey was undertaken essentially as per the Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines* (3rd edition), 2016.

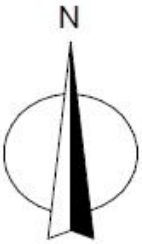
Wild Birds
A visual search for nests or signs of nests was undertaken whilst undertaking the bat preliminary roost assessment.

2.2 Constraints to survey
No significant constraints to survey were encountered.

Map 1 Location of the building subject to survey (outlined in red)







3 Results

Bats

Preliminary roost assessment

The building is built of stone with a pitched roof of tiles that had been recently re-instated (recent aerial photos show the barn roofless) and is lined with membrane. There is no separate roof void. The tiles (including the ridge tiles) are flush and offer no opportunities for bat roosting beneath them. There are doorway and window openings in the walls, but no doors or windows were present. Consequently, the inside of the barn is light and draughty. The window and door openings also make for easy ingress of bats into/out of the building The roof timbers are new, modern and crack-free. See photos 1 to 3.

There were also small gaps in the stonework and mortar that could potentially be used by bats for roosting, eg; see photo 4. However, all of these were adequately inspected and showed no signs of bat use at the time of survey.

Overall, this building was considered to be very poorly suited to bat use as follows: well lit, and having light and/or draughty roof ‘void’. No bats or signs of bat use were seen inside the building or in any inspected gaps/voids in the stonework.

Wild Birds

No nests were observed.

Photos 1 – 4

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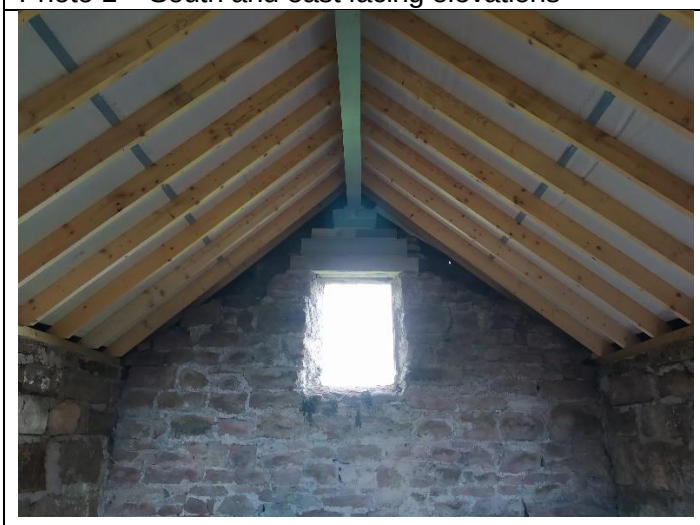
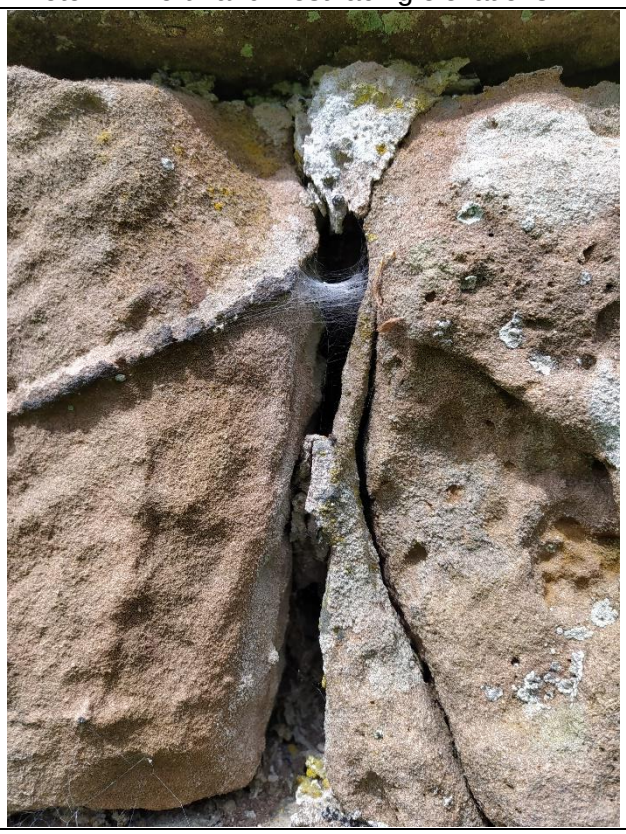
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Photo 1 – South and east facing elevations</td><td>Photo 2 – North and west facing elevations</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Photo 3 – Internal view</td><td>Photo 4 – Example of an inspected void in the stonework</td></tr>
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4 Outline Legislative Background

Bats
The government advice regarding legislation pertaining to bats can be found at the following webpages: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bats-surveys-and-mitigation-for-development-projects and https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bats-protection-surveys-and-licences (accessed July 2020).

Therein, the law is summarised as follows:

"You're breaking the law if you do certain things including:
- deliberately capture, injure or kill bats
- damage or destroy a breeding or resting place
- obstruct access to their resting or sheltering places
- possess, sell, control or transport live or dead bats, or parts of them
- intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it's in a structure or place of shelter or protection

Either or both of the following could happen if you're found guilty of any offences:
- you could be sent to prison for up to 6 months
- you could get an unlimited fine."

Birds
The government advice regarding legislation pertaining to birds can be found at the following webpages: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wild-birds-surveys-and-mitigation-for-development-projects and https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wild-birds-protection-surveys-and-licences (accessed July 2020).

Therein, the law is summarised as follows:

"You're breaking the law if you:
- intentionally kill, injure or take wild birds
- intentionally take, damage or destroy a wild bird's nest while it's being used or built
- intentionally take or destroy a wild bird's egg
- possess, control or transport live or dead wild birds, or parts of them, or their eggs
- sell wild birds or put them on display for sale
- use prohibited methods to kill or take wild birds

…You could get an unlimited fine and up to 6 months in prison for each offence if you're found guilty."

5 Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1 Bats

It is considered that the survey undertaken adequately established that the building is unlikely to currently be used as a place of breeding, resting, shelter or protection by bats (=roost) and is very poorly suited to such use. Hence no significant impact or offence in regard to this species group is predicted if the conversion is permitted.

Given this, no mitigation is required. However, an informative may be appropriate suggesting due diligence by contractors during the works period. For example, in the very unlikely event that bats, or evidence of bats, are encountered during any part of the development, then works should cease immediately, or an offence may be caused. A consultant ecologist and/or Natural England should be consulted before works recommence.

By way of enhancement and in keeping with local and national policies, one woodcrete bat box, Schwegler 2F or direct equivalent should be provided in the locality of the application. An example can be found at http://www.nhbs.com/title/158629/2fschwegler-bat-box-general-purpose (accessed July 2020) Further information about the erection of boxes can be found here: http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/bat_boxes.html#Putting%20up%20your%20box (accessed July 2020).

5.2 Wild Birds

No wild bird nests were found. If no active nest is present, nesting can legally be discouraged by making the building bird-proof. If active nests (including those being built) are found before or during conversion work, damage or destruction should be avoided as this may well cause an offence. Any such damage or destruction should be delayed until the nest becomes disused.

By way of enhancement and in keeping with local and national policies, one open fronted nest box should be installed in an appropriate location in the locality of the application. An example can be found here: https://www.birdfood.co.uk/stafford-half-open-nest-box (accessed July 2020).