BAT SURVEY OF TALBOT HOTEL IN LEEK, STAFFORDSHIRE

A report to:

Saxondale Properties

By:

EMEC Ecology
The Old Ragged School
Brook Street
Nottingham
NG1 1EA

Tel: (0115) 964 4828
Fax: (0115) 964 4829
E-mail: mail@emec-ecology.co.uk
Website: www.emec-ecology.co.uk

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report has been prepared by EMEC Ecology for Saxondale Properties. It provides the details of a bat survey of a disused hotel which is proposed for demolition and conversion.

1.2 The buildings occur off Ashbourne Road in Leek, Staffordshire (approximate grid reference SK 987 564).

1.3 The survey was commissioned to ascertain whether the proposed works would affect protected species; specifically bats.

1.4 All species of British bat and their roosts are protected under British law by the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended), and bats are classified as European Protected species under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). This makes it an offence to kill, injure or disturb a bat and to destroy any place used for rest or shelter by a bat (exceptions apply to disturbance within the living area of a dwelling). The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000 strengthens protection given by the WCA and covers 'reckless' damage or disturbance to a bat roost. Breaches of the CRoW act may result in a fine of up to £5000 or up to six months imprisonment.

1.5 Development work can only be permitted to affect a bat roost under a European Protected Species (EPS) licence from Natural England.

1.6 Licences in respect of European protected species affected by development can be granted under Regulation 44(2)(e) of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended), for the purpose of preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment.

1.7 Under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) licences can only be issued if Natural England are satisfied that:

- There is no satisfactory alternative; and
- The action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

1.8 Natural England aim to process licence applications within 30 working days of receipt.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 General

The building surveyed is situated off Ashbourne Road in the town centre of Leek. The site is surrounded by residential and commercial properties. The survey location is shown by Figure 1 in Appendix 1 and by photographs in the text.

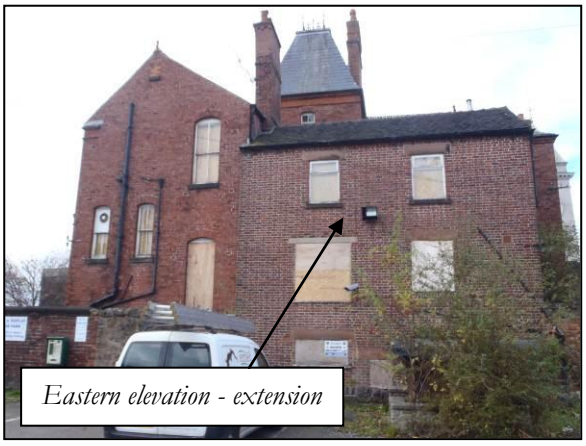
2.2 Hotel

2.2.1 *Exterior*

The building comprises of numerous extensions attached to the original main structure which forms a central 'L-shape' which is three storeys with an additional small four storey section (Section 1 – see Figure 2 in Appendix 1). There is a single storey flat roof extension to the west elevation (Section 2). A three storey extension is present on the eastern elevation which creates an overall rectangular shape (Section 3). A final extension is present on the northern elevation of the main structure which is not accessible from the interior and boarded on the exterior (Section 4).

Southern elevation – original main structure

Western elevation – flat roof extension

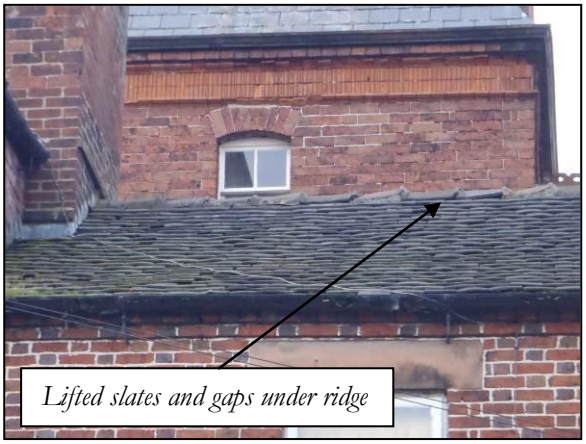


Eastern elevation - extension

Extension on northern elevation

Section 1 is solid red brick with decorative corbel detailing. The roof is in very good condition with no visible lifted or missing slates and no mortar loss beneath the ridge tiles. The lead flashing is flush to the brickwork around the chimney and dormer windows. Section 2 has a bitumastic felt roof which is in good condition with no areas of standing water or lifted felt.

Section 3 is in a poorer state of repair with numerous gaps present under lifted tiles and where mortar is missing beneath ridge tiles. Section 4 is in poor condition with numerous lifted tiles and occasional missing tiles creating gaps and access to the interior.


Lifted slates and gaps under ridge


Gaps around window frame


Broken ground floor window


Gap between wooden fascia and wall

Numerous gaps are present on the exterior of the building around the window frames where the brickwork and mortar has been weathered and also between the wooden fascias and the wall of the flat roof extension. All windows except for those on the fourth storey are boarded-up. However the top of the ground-floor window in Section 1 is exposed and has been broken providing potential interior access.

2.2.2 *Interior*

The ground floor is dark and damp with evidence of mould growing on the walls. It contains a bar and seating area. It is extremely dirty with all surfaces covered in dust. Light gaps are visible within the ground floor where the flat roof section joins the original building. The first floor has an additional bar area as well as private quarters including bedrooms, a kitchen and an office. The rooms are all dark with boarded windows and have smooth painted walls or wall-paper. Further bedrooms and a bathroom are present on the second floor which are all dusty and dirty with cobwebs. These rooms have flat ceilings with sections that were vaulted indicating a small apex loft space is present above. The small four storey section contains a single bedroom which is well-lit as the window is not boarded and is intact. Access to the loft space above this section is via a small loft hatch.

Ground floor – light gaps

Second floor room

The loft space above Section 3 is accessed via a hatch in a bedroom. This has a king post roof with additional support timber posts. The roof is lined with bitumastic felt which does not appear to have any tears in. no light gaps are visible within the loft. The surfaces are very dusty with old tiles littering the floor.

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The loft space above the four storey section is a box shape with a steel frame with timber joists attached to brick walls which are approximately 0.5m tall. The remaining side walls have bitumastic felt beneath the slates. No light gaps are present and the surfaces and generally dusty.

There was no access to any other loft spaces although it is considered that an apex loft space above Section 1 is present.

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3. SURVEY RESULTS

3.1 Daytime Bat Survey

The building was surveyed for the following signs of bats: droppings, feeding remains, scratch marks, urine stains and actual sightings, as well as potential access points and roost sites such as holes, cracks and crevices. Both the interior and exterior of the building were surveyed. High-powered torches and a ladder were used to inspect features.

3.2 Nesting Bird Survey

The building was also searched for evidence of bird nests.

3.3 Survey Details

EMEC Ecology carried out the above survey on the 15th October 2012.

3.4 Survey Personnel

Survey was carried out by Alison Sharkey MSc Grad IEEM (Licence number 20122181) and assisted by Natasha Murray MSc Grad IEEM.

3.5 Limitations

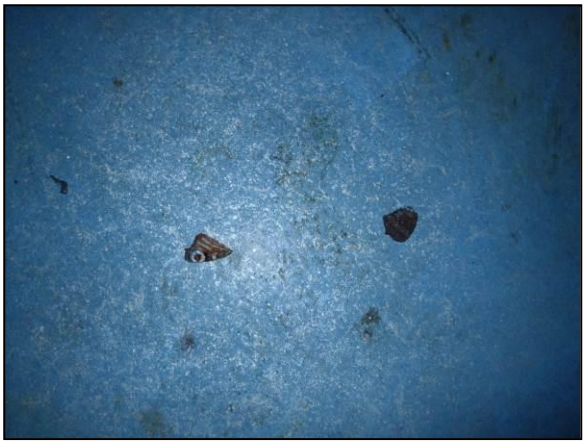
It was not possible to survey the interior of the extension on the northern elevation as all windows and doors were boarded and access from the interior of the building was not possible. Access to the apex loft space above the original main structure was not possible.

4. SURVEY RESULTS

4.1 Daytime Bat Survey

Although no evidence of bats was found within the building surveyed, numerous gaps and crevices were present on the exterior of the building which provide potential roosting habitat for bats.

The roofs of the Section 3 and 4 were in a poor condition with numerous gaps created beneath lifted tiles and where tiles were missing. Gaps were all visible around some windows frames where the brickwork had been weather and between the wooden fascias and the wall. Access to the interior of the property was possible via a broken window pane. The interior was dark and sheltered suitable for bat-use however it was damp and dirty. A number of sheltering/hibernating peacock butterflies (*Inachis io*) were present on the interior walls on both the ground floor and second floor. Feeding remains (wing fragments) were found on a window-sill on the first floor (three fragments) and on the bathroom floor on the second floor (two fragments). These are likely to be feeding remains from spiders rather than birds (e.g. wrens) or bats.



4.3 Nesting Bird Survey

No evidence of nesting birds was seen within the building.

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5. EVALUATION & MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Bats

Although no evidence of bats was found within the building, numerous gaps and crevices were present on the exterior of the building which could potentially provide bat refuges. Access was also possible to the interior of the building which provides suitable conditions for roosting and perching. Feeding remains were present in two locations within the interior of the building which are considered spider feeding remains.

Bat activity surveys (evening emergence / dawn swarming surveys) between May-September using electronic bat detectors are required to ascertain whether bats are using the features identified. To meet current industry guidelines and planning requirements a minimum of two activity surveys are likely to be necessary to determine whether the works can proceed without specific mitigation and consultation with Natural England regarding a possible EPS (Bats) licence.

5.2 Nesting Birds

No evidence of bird nesting or features suitable for nesting birds were found, it is considered that demolition of the buildings will not be constrained by the bird nesting season. All birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) whilst breeding. This legislation protects nests, eggs and unfledged young from damage, or destruction. As the interior of the extension on the northern elevation could not be inspected, a thorough examination for nesting birds will be required prior to demolition. Should active nests be found, chicks must be allowed to fledge before works begin.

APPENDIX 1: FIGURES

Figure 1: Site location

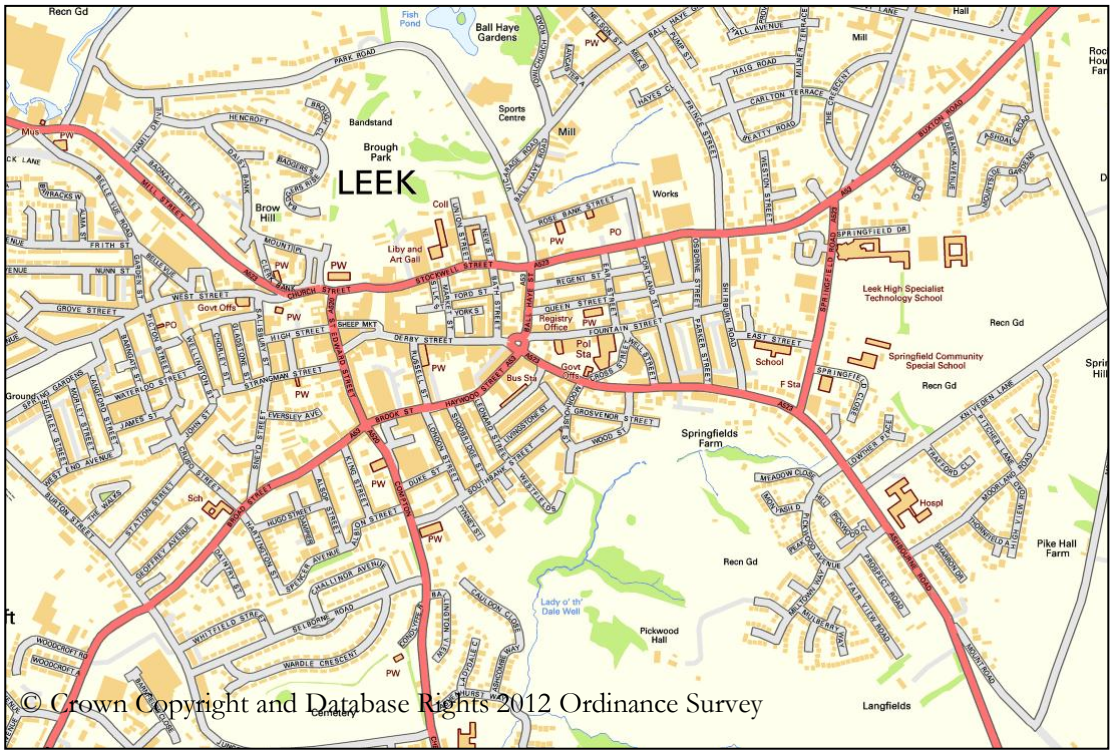
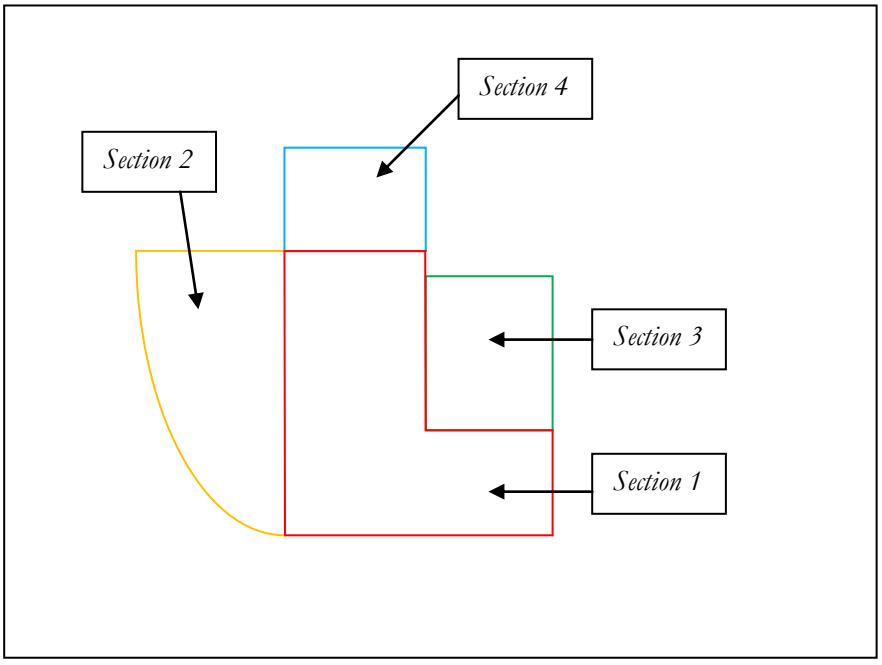


Figure 2: Site plan



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QUALITY ASSURANCE:

TITLE: Talbot Hotel in Leek, Staffordshire

SUBMITTED TO: Saxondale Properites

ISSUE AND REVISION RECORD:

Contract Number: NM/12/3436/01

Revision Number: 1

Description: Final Report

Date: 22nd October 2012

THE BRITISH ASSESSMENT BUREAU ISO9001

AUTHOR

Name: Natasha Murray MSc Grad IEEM **Signed:** N. Murray

INTERNAL REVIEWER

Name: Sean Gallagher MSc MIEEM **Signed:**