

The Croft Dilhorne Road Dilhorne Stoke on Trent ST10 2PH

Ecological Scoping Survey

THE TYRER PARTNERSHIP



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Ecological Scoping Survey

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APPENDIX I - Site Photographs

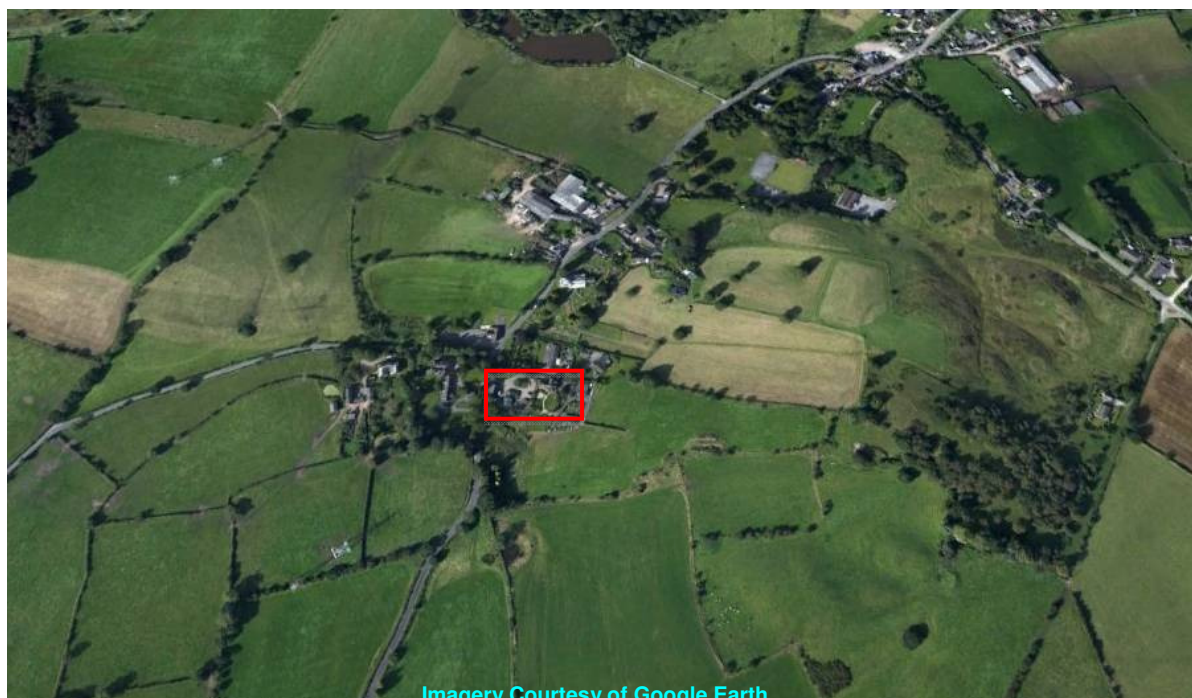
1.0 Introduction & Reason for Survey

1.1 As part of a proposed Planning Application regarding the property known as The Croft, Dilhorne Road, an ecological scoping survey was undertaken. Ecological surveys, particularly where a specially protected species is or may be present, are generally required as part of the Local Authority's Planning Policies, therefore Philip Kelsall Building Design & Consultancy Ltd on behalf of his client, commissioned the survey and report.

1.2 The basic objective of the survey was to ascertain the nature of the land and where possible obtain information on any sensitive wildlife habitats or species that may be present and if so if they will be affected by any future development of the site. To achieve this objective the survey aimed to identify/assess any of the following:

- The presence of species with non-statutory protection
- The presence/potential presence of species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended or the conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)
- Identify any species or habitats that require special consideration during the development.

If the habitat was found to be suitable for the aforementioned species or signs of use were found then more detailed surveys would be recommended. If bats or Great crested newts were subsequently found during those detailed surveys and may be affected by the development proposals then a European Protected Species Licence would be required to proceed with the development.



Location of the site & surrounding habitat

2.0 UK Biodiversity Plans

- 2.1 The United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan lists priority species/habitats which might potentially use a given site, based upon the site visit there is low potential for any UK priority species to be present.

3.0 Local Biodiversity Action Plans

- 3.1 LBAP are simply a way of encouraging people to work together and deliver a programme of continuing action for biodiversity at a local level. They set out practical steps that aim to:
- help protect biodiversity
 - enhance and improve biodiversity where possible, and
 - promote biodiversity at a local level
- 3.2 Whilst there is no legal protection for sites of Local Biological Interest per se the presence of a protected species within them would attract the usual protection afforded to it/them. Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (SBAP) lists key local species/habitats considered to be rare or declining in the area. Some may be of national concern, while others may only be locally rare. Some are statutorily protected, although the great majority are not.
- 3.3 The internet search (Magic Mapping) revealed that the site is not within close proximity to any designated sites, to the extent that would generate conservation concern.
- 3.4 Based on information gathered from the site visit there are no species or habitats present that are listed within the SBAP.

4.0 Protected Species in Staffordshire

- 4.1 Up to ten bat species have been regularly recorded in Staffordshire most of which use built structures, notably occupied residential properties, for roosting. The most frequently encountered species is the Pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus*) and its abundant status in Staffordshire is reflected throughout the UK.
- 4.2 Badgers (*Meles meles*) as with barn owls are mainly confined to rural areas of Staffordshire but on occasions can be found in more urbanised environments where suitable shelter and foraging habitat exists. They cannot be deliberately killed or trapped except under licence. The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 consolidates past badger legislation and, in addition to protecting the animal itself, makes it an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct badger setts.
- 4.3 Great crested newts are present within the Staffordshire landscape and although many as with many counties ponds have been lost the closest records of GCN are located over 2 kilometres from the site (Source: NBN Gateway). GCN are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981(as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). It is illegal to catch, possess or handle GCN without a licence and it is also illegal to cause them harm or death, or to disturb their habitat in any way.
- 4.4 The potential presence of reptiles at the site, particularly rare UK species, is considered to be low. Furthermore, there is a lack of features within the site boundaries, which would offer life-cycle benefits to species such as grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) or slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*), which are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (As amended)

- 4.5 Water voles (*Arvicola amphibius*) are legally protected in Britain and in 1998 were included on Schedule 5, Section 9 (4) a & b of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) as numbers have plummeted by more than 90 per cent in the UK in recent years.

Guidance for Local Authorities: Extract from Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Circular 06/2005

"It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision."

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 A 'walkover' of the site was conducted which included a search for typical signs of badger activity which includes digging, occupied setts, 'runs' leading to and from a sett or the existence of latrines or 'snuffle' holes where badgers have foraged in the ground. A map and field search was undertaken in relation to the presence of ponds or ditches that may support Great crested newts or Water voles and the land assessed in relation to flora. The information gathered would then be used to establish if more detailed surveys are required.
- 5.2 There is a barn at the site therefore an investigation for bats or breeding birds was conducted which assessed the building for roost/nesting potential, evidence of use and if the site could be of value to foraging/commuting bats.
- 5.3 Were more detailed surveys for protected species are recommended, following a daytime survey, then the Local Planning Authority, on the advice of their ecological advisor, are unlikely to determine an application until such time that all relevant information is gathered, i.e. until all additional survey work has been completed. The advice that is provided by the ecological advisor is also in accordance with the obligations placed upon Local Authorities by way of its duties under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). Therefore it would be prudent to make enquiries to the relevant departmental Planning Officer or their ecological advisor before submitting a Planning Application, which includes a report that recommends more detailed surveys.

6.0 Personnel

- 6.1 The survey was undertaken by Mr S Irwin who is an experienced ecologist and holds a Class 2 Natural England bat licence (All counties of England) and a Natural England licence to disturb barn owls.

7.0 Constraints

- 7.1 The site in its entirety was accessible for assessment in relation to all of the aforementioned species, and was undertaken during a suitable time of year for ecological surveying thus it is considered that no constraints were identified during the survey that would prevent the gathering of information on which to base conclusions and recommendations.

8.0 Site Description

- 8.1 The Croft is situated in the small village of Dilhorne in a rural environment, which typically is surrounded by an extensive agricultural background matrix. Boundaries are well defined, which broadly take the form of fences, hedgerow and trees, both native and ornamental. Within the site an occupied residential building, a large barn and several small outbuildings are evident; all are surrounded by hard standing, amenity grass and the boundary vegetation.
- 8.2 The immediate and surrounding habitat can be considered as being favourable for bats and barn owls; where such habitat is present close to buildings then the percentage use of those buildings, by bats increases given that roost opportunities are available and vice versa.

9.0 Results

Bats

The barn is a large unoccupied structure but is redundant from its former agricultural purpose and is typical of a building of its era; it is constructed in brick with a slate pitched roof. It is generally in a good external condition; however, internal remedial and modernisation work is required to make the building suitable for the required residential purpose.

An upper floor is present and is to total approximate dimensions of 9 metres long x 4 metres wide x 2.5 metres high; it is light filled and to some extent of a draughty nature; therefore it is considered unsuitable for use as a breeding roost by the loft dwelling Brown Long Eared bat. (*Plecotus auritus*) During the search of the upper and ground floor of the barn no recent or historic evidence was found that would indicate use by this or any other bat species.

There is an absence of underfelt or sarking boards beneath the roof slates, which will significantly decrease roost potential in this area for crevice dwelling bats, such as the Pipistrelle, whereby they often roost between the two materials, provided that external access is available. The breeding roosts of Pipistrelle bats are proportionally higher in occupied residential dwellings where the warm, dry conditions favour the requirements of a maternity colony but other structures are also used, especially for hibernation or by male bats as they do not need the same conditions as a maternity colony.

During the external inspection typical places favoured by crevice dwelling bats such as soffit or barge boards are absent and the brickwork still retains intact mortar joints although there is a gap at two ridge tiles where slate has slipped. However, during the internal inspection the underside of these tiles was visible; if bats were to be present beneath the ridge tiles then corresponding evidence of bat droppings would exist in the upper floor below the tiles, which was not the case.

Great crested newts/Water voles

Within the site boundaries there is an absence of ponds and no obvious water bodies were identified within the locality, therefore the site offers no incentive for this species and the presence of Water vole is also considered to be absent.

Terrestrial Mammals

During the search of the site no evidence of badger activity such as 'runs,' foraging activity, a sett or latrines was found although within the surrounding and immediate vicinity suitable foraging and commuting habitat for this species.

Breeding birds

The presence of Schedule 1 species such as barn owls is considered to be absent and throughout the search of the barn no evidence of this or other birds that show a high dependency upon built structures was found; nesting potential for barn owls is low –absent.

The potential for common woodland/garden birds is evident along the boundaries but it is understood that they will not be affected by the barn conversion.

Common frogs & toads

As in many gardens common amphibians may be present in the nearby garden but the proposed barn conversion will not have an impact should they be present.

Vegetation

There is no floristic value at the proposed work area but the boundary tree/hedge lines will be of general wildlife value.

10.0 Conclusions

- 10.1 From the survey results it can be concluded that the barn has not been used by loft dwelling bats, notably the Brown Long Eared bat and that the barn holds little potential for crevice dwelling bats.
- 10.2 It can further be concluded that the conversion schedule will not result in the loss of moderate - high value bat roost potential and based on the results of the daytime survey, there will not be a requirement for dusk/dawn surveys.
- 10.3 There are no current implications in relation to barn owls that would prevent the conversion of the barn taking place and the proposals would not result in the loss of a site that is used by barn owls.
- 10.4 On the day of the survey evidence was not located to suggest the presence of badger activity; additionally there are no badger setts within the development area. Therefore, based on the survey results it is concluded that this species would not be impacted upon.
- 10.5 No suitable breeding or refuge habitat for Great crested newt was identified at the site; therefore any future developments at the site are unlikely to affect this species.
- 10.6 The site does not support plant species of ecological importance.

11.0 Recommendations

- 11.1 It is recommended that during the conversion of the barn access is provide at the ridge tiles by way of two ridge tile vents (See Figure 1) to give access to the full length of the ridge "tunnel"
- 11.2 If at anytime bat/s is/are encountered or suspected of being present then as a legal requirement work should immediately cease and a bat ecologist contacted for further advice.

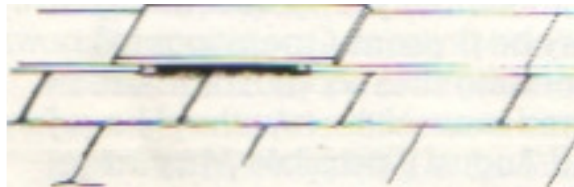


Figure 1: Access in ridge tiles

**APPENDIX I –
Site Photographs**



Barn at the Croft



Location of slipped slate at ridge tile



Underside of bare slate



Light filled upper floor