STEPHEN GOWER BA DIPTP MRTPI (Rtd)
- **LICENSED BAT WORKER**
- **MEMBER OF STAFFORDSHIRE MAMMAL GROUP**
- **MEMBER OF THE MAMMAL SOCIETY**

SURVEY RELATING TO THE FORMER ST.JOHN'S SCHOOL, MILL LANE, WETLEY ROCKS.

***DATE OF SURVEY**: 15th June 2012*

PURPOSE OF SURVEY

It is proposed to convert this former school and school house to four residential units which will involve significant internal alterations and the removal of temporary class room facilities to the rear of the site. This survey and appraisal is to satisfy the requirements of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to ensure bats, a European protected species and their roost, and other protected species, are not adversely affected. In this particular case the only creatures likely to be affected are bats. The main building has been unused for some time as is evident from the internal condition although the attached school house was occupied until approximately 18 months ago.

DESCRIPTION:

The school and school house are constructed mainly of natural stone with some brick (on the rear elevations) and slate tile roof. The attached school house provides two storey accommodation, but the main school buildings are single storey but with a split level roof space. At the time of inspection the buildings were considered to be in a generally sound condition externally in respect of main walls and roof, although internally there were problems caused by the ingress of water, and general deterioration following years of being vacant. It is intended to create a first floor level within the entire length of the roof space of the main building but without affecting the existing roof structure. The school house would be essentially unchanged internally. The three temporary classrooms at the rear of the site were also inspected for signs of bats.
Photographs of the building are attached as an Appendix to this survey.

APPRAISAL:

The buildings were inspected internally and externally for their suitability for bats, and evidence of their occupation, using an endoscope where necessary.
From an external inspection it was observed that the main walls were soundly pointed and provided no opportunities for crevice seeking bats. Similarly the slate roof was in good condition, such that it would be difficult for bats to gain entry to the roof space, particularly in the main school building which would potentially provide a suitable roosting area as it was unused. It was noted that all the main windows to the property had been boarded up to prevent vandalism.
In respect of the school house there was no roof void which could be inspected and therefore little or no scope for bats to roost within a space not used as part of the normal domestic area. The fact that this part of the school complex had been occupied until fairly recently also meant there was little likelihood of bats roosting as means of entry was not available.
The remainder of the school building previously used as classrooms was potentially more interesting from a bat perspective as there was an unused split level roof void which was undisturbed, and enjoyed natural light from only one dormer window. However, an inspection of this area indicated no droppings or other signs of use by bats, probably reflecting difficulties in obtaining entry to the roof space as the condition of the slates and roof generally was so sound. At the time of inspection the small vent slits on both the south and north gables were blocked, these being the most likely means of entry for bats.
An inspection of the three temporary buildings also confirmed that these were essentially unsuitable as roosting sites for bats with no droppings or other indications of use by bats.

CONCLUSION

There was no evidence from the inspection of the school (and school house) to suggest either current or historic use by bats. I am therefore satisfied that the buildings can be satisfactorily converted without causing loss of a roost site. In this particular case I would not have considered further surveys or an emergence survey necessary. However, in the interests of biodiversity, as the section of the roof space as shown on the cross section plan could be particularly attractive to bats, it is recommended that as this is not required for living space, it is maintained as a bat loft, with the vents reduced in size internally to prevent use by birds, acting as the means of entry (as shown on the plan attached as an Appendix). It is known from previous surveys conducted at the adjacent church that there are good populations of bats in the locality, and whilst there are roosting sites in the church and mature trees nearby, the measures proposed (reinforced by a planning condition),would complement these existing roosts. Such provision would be attractive for many species of bats including brown long eared, which prefer a more spacious area to fly within the roof.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

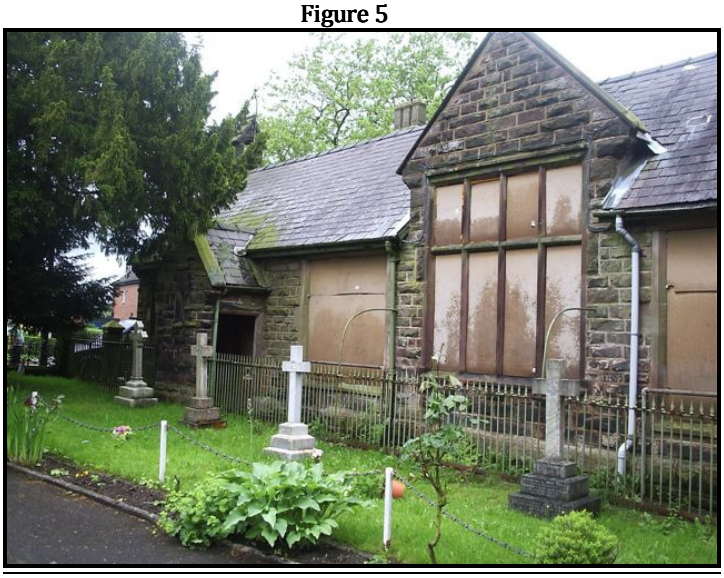

Figure 6