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Barn to the rear of the Printer's Arms in Thornsett, Birch Vale, Derbyshire

Daytime Bat Inspection

Issue record

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by Peak Ecology Ltd on behalf of Mr Stuart Turner. It provides details of a daytime bat survey undertaken of a barn to the rear of the Printer's Arms Public House in Thornsett, Birch Vale. The public house is located off Thornsett, Birch Vale in the High Peak, Derbyshire (grid ref: SK 010 869).

A planning application is currently being prepared for the conversion of a barn, immediately to the rear of the public house, into a holiday let. However, in order to complete this application, a report detailing the presence of any protected species must be completed.

The object of this survey was therefore to establish whether the barn is used by bats and/or nesting birds and if necessary, to recommend further work in order to advise mitigation measures.

All bat species are listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and are protected by Parts 4(b), 4(c) and 5 of Section 9 of that Act. All bat species are also European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

In net effect, it is a legal offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill bats;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb bats;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obscure access to a breeding site or resting place*
- Possess, control, transport, sell or exchange a bat or any part of a bat, unless acquired legally.

*Because bats use roosts at different times of year, and often return to the same roosts annually, it is a legal opinion that a roost is protected whether bats are in occupancy at the time or not.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) makes it a legal offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure, or take any wild bird;
- Damage, destroy or take the nest of any wild bird;
- Take or destroy the egg/s of any wild bird
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb any species listed on Schedule 1 of the act (e.g. Barn Owl) whilst on or building a nest; in or near a nest with eggs;
- Disturb the dependant young of a Schedule 1 bird.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Building Inspection

The building inspection was carried out by Sarah Allen (Natural England Bat Licence No. 20120206) following accepted standard methodologies set out by the Bat Conservation Trust (2007), on the 28th March 2012.

An external and internal inspection of the barn was carried out to identify potential access points suitable for bats and any evidence of bats. High powered torches, ladders, an endoscope and binoculars were available for use where appropriate.

Also noted from the external and internal building inspection was the presence of birds or evidence of nesting.

Photos were taken of both external and internal features of the building to document findings and are included in the report.

2.2. Building Assessment

The building was described as having low, medium or high potential to support roosting bats. Evaluation of potential is necessarily subjective and relies on professional judgment. Any building given a medium or high potential should be subject to more detailed assessment. The following gives a guide to how this evaluation was implemented:

- Low potential – Buildings that have limited features suitable for roosting and/or limited potential access points. There is no physical evidence of bats using the building and it is unlikely that they are doing so.
- Medium potential – Buildings that have some features and potential access points that look suitable for use by roosting bats. Limited or ambiguous physical evidence *may* have been seen. It is possible that bats may be using the building.
- High potential – Buildings with many or better quality features and potential access points that appear suitable for use by roosting bats. Physical evidence may have been seen. It is highly possible or probable that bats may be using the building.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Building Description

The barn was a small stand-alone barn, measuring approximately 10m by 5m. It was two-storey, constructed of traditional stone with a traditional slate pitched roof. It is understood that the roof was replaced sometime in 2011 and the stone work was also re-pointed at this time. There were four 'Velux' windows in the roof. There was also a window on each gable end. These windows did not currently contain glass but it is understood that they are covered with wooden boards at night. A window frame covered in a plastic sheet was also present on the western elevation of the barn and an open doorway was present in the southern gable end. New wooden fascia boards were fitted to the property, with the plastic guttering attached. It is understood that these were only installed on the barn the day prior to this survey.





The interior of the barn was undergoing some conversion work at the time of this survey, with workmen present. A first floor had been constructed with wooden joists and wooden boards. This was open to the roof, where the breathable membranous lining could be seen in places. The majority of the walls and the roof had been covered in 50mm of insulation, supported by a wooden frame, with only small areas of exposed stone work visible. The interior was light, due to the large 'Velux' windows and noisy due to the presence of workmen.





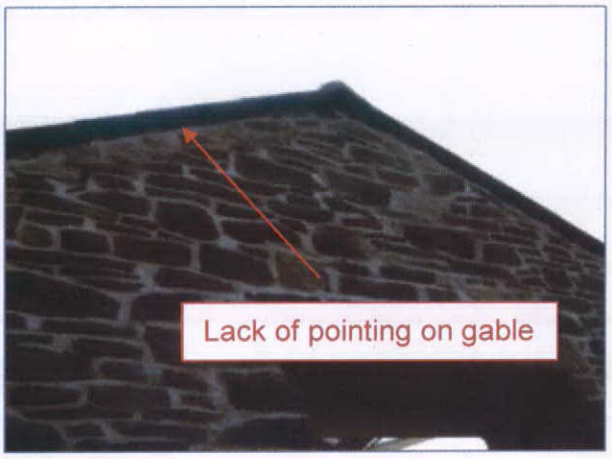
3.2. External Inspection

No evidence of roosting bats was seen during the external inspection.

The walls were well pointed with no gaps or cracks. Similarly the roof slates were all intact and tight, with no potential access points for bats.

A small gap occurred between the fascia board and the stone wall. However, it is understood that this was due to the fascia board being newly fitted and this would be filled with expanding foam within a few days. Similarly the pointing along the northern gable had not been completed but was also programmed for completion within the near future. It was considered unlikely that bats would use these features prior to them being filled, due to the constant noise from the conversion work.





3.3. Internal Inspection

No evidence of bats was found during the internal inspection.

The interior was considered sub-optimal for use by bats, as all of the exposed surfaces had been covered with insulation, leaving no cracks, crevices or enclosed areas suitable for use by bats. Furthermore, the building was extremely light, due to the presence of four large windows and was subject to on-going disturbance, such as drilling, which would deter any bats.

A large crevice was found around the inside of the window frames on each gable end. This was heavily cobwebbed on the southern gable but was less so on the northern gable. This crevice led into small gaps and cavities within the stone walls that were considered to provide some suitability for use by bats. However, there was no evidence to suggest they had been used in the past and it is understood that the windows are covered over, restricting access to these areas at night. Furthermore, the noise of the workmen, in close proximity to this area, would likely deter any bats.

3.4. Surrounding Habitats

The barn occurred immediately north of a public house, within a small area of hardstanding, with a water feature and a newly planted flower bed. Residential properties also occurred to either side

(east and west) with an overgrown grassland field, with scattered scrub, to the north. On a wider scale, small numbers of residential, commercial and industrial properties occur. However, the main landscape is typical of the High Peak, with pasture fields separated by dry stone walls and occasional trees, with a river running within the valley bottom.

3.5. Nesting Birds

No evidence of nesting birds was seen during the survey and it is considered that the on-going disturbance at the current time, which is the beginning of the bird nesting season, would likely deter any birds from beginning to nest within the building.

4. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Bats

As no evidence of bats was found during the survey and the building is considered extremely unlikely to be used by bats in its current state, work may proceed as proposed, without any predicted impacts from bats.

It is not considered necessary to undertake further survey work on the barn, as a risk to bats is considered extremely unlikely.

4.2. Nesting Birds

As no evidence of nesting birds was seen during the survey and their presence during the works is considered extremely unlikely, work may proceed, as planned, without specific mitigation for birds.

4.3. General Mitigation Recommendations

If bats are found during any work, work should stop immediately and a licensed bat ecologist should be consulted.

If breeding birds are encountered during any work, work should stop in that area and only be continued when breeding has ceased and young have left the nest.

5. ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Potential Impacts

5.1.1 Bat Roosts

It is considered extremely unlikely that there will be any impacts on roosting bats from the proposed conversion, due to the lack of evidence of bats and the sub-optimal nature of the building at the current time.

5.1.2 Bat Foraging and Commuting Habitat

There is no predicted impact on foraging or commuting habitat.

5.1.3 Birds

It is considered unlikely that the proposed works will have a negative impact on nesting birds.

5.2. Conclusions

The works may proceed, as proposed, without any perceived risk to bats or nesting birds.

6. REFERENCES

Bat Conservation Trust (2007) *Bat surveys – Good Practice Guidelines.* Bat Conservation Trust.

Mitchell-Jones A. J. (2004) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines* English Nature

Mitchell-Jones A. J. and McLeish A. P. (2004) *Bat Workers' Manual 3rd Edition* JNCC

APPENDIX 1 – SITE LOCATION PLAN

