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Bat Emergence Surveys of Barn at Waterside, Buxworth

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SPECIALISING IN ALL PROTECTED SPECIES



INTRODUCTION

Ecologists from MG Wildlife were commissioned to undertake two dusk emergence surveys for bats on a derelict building at Waterside, Buxworth. The surveys were a precautionary measure as the building has features suitable for bats and a previous survey of the building located two historic droppings of brown long-eared bats (*Plecotus auritus*). There is also a known small roost of this species in a nearby building.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site lies approximately 1.5 km to the north of the village of Whaley Bridge in the High Peak district of Derbyshire at OSGR SK 013 831 and consists of a single storey barn attached on the eastern end to a dwelling property.

The building is stone-built, with a tiled gable ended roof on the main section. There is another smaller section of the building, but the roof on this section has collapsed.

The building is in a general state of disrepair, with a number of access points suitable for bats under slipped and raised tiles and through holes in the stonework and mortar.

Habitats in the immediate vicinity of the building consist of a narrow strip of woodland to the north, dwelling properties to the east and unmanaged grassland to the south and west.

Habitats in the wider area consist mainly of arable and pastoral land, with a river running north-south to the west of the site.

METHODOLOGY

Dusk emergence surveys were undertaken by a team of surveyors, at least one of which on each occasion was the holder of a current Natural England licence to survey for bats.

The surveyors were placed in such a way as to ensure that all aspects of the building were visible and each used a Stagg Electronics 'Batbox Duet' heterodyne bat detector to enable acoustic detection of any bats present as well as visual detection.

The surveys were carried out in appropriate weather conditions during the active season for bats and were carried out in accordance with current guidelines given by Mitchell-Jones (2004) and the Bat Conservation Trust (2012), with the surveys commencing half an hour before dusk and continuing until approximately two hours after dusk on each occasion.

There were no constraints to the surveys.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

Current development proposals are to renovate the building to be used as a dwelling property.

SURVEY RESULTS

Table 1 - Environmental Variables During Surveys

	13 th September 2012	27 th September 2012
Dusk time		19.00
Temp °C (Start)	15	11
Temp °C (End)	12.8	12
Wind Speed (mph)	7	5
Cloud Cover Start (%)	90	90
Cloud Cover End (%)	70	90
Weather	Fine and dry	Fine and dry

13th September 2012

During the survey no bats were seen entering or exiting the building.

There was bat activity recorded in the vicinity of the site with records of common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) at various points throughout the survey and commuting brown long-eared bats recorded at 20.05, 20.10 and 20.13.

In addition a wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) was noted flying from a gap in the stonework on this occasion.

27th September 2012

During the survey no bats were seen entering or exiting the building.

There was bat activity recorded in the vicinity of the site with records of common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) activity consisting of commuting and foraging at 19.13, 19.17, 19.19, and 19.58. A single pass of brown long-eared bat was recorded at 19.16.

CONSTRAINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Bats and their habitats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CROW Act 2000), and by the Habitats Regulations 1994 (as amended 2007). In summary, these make it an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct any place used by bats for breeding and shelter, disturb a bat, or kill, injure or take any bat.

In addition, seven bat species are on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and are listed as Species of Principal Importance under the provisions of the NERC Act 2006. The National Planning Policy Network document 'ODPM Circular 06/2005' gives guidance on the treatment of Species of Principal Importance and states that local authorities should ensure that they are protected from the adverse effects of development, where appropriate, by using planning conditions or obligations.

Although evidence of the historic presence of bats was found within the building within the site and there were visible features present on the building considered suitable for use by bats, no bats were seen entering or exiting the building during the two surveys.

Therefore, bats are not considered to pose a constraint to the proposed development of the building and no further survey for bats is necessary.

The risk of bats being present during any work on the building is considered to be negligible.

However, bats are highly mobile species and can inhabit buildings at any time. Due to this, contractors should be made aware of the fact that bats may be present if work is undertaken during the active season for bats (March to October inclusive). In the unlikely event that a bat is found, particularly during work on the roof of the building, all work should cease and an appropriately licensed ecologist and/or Natural England should be contacted as it is possible that a European Protected Species licence would be required for work to continue.

NESTING BIRDS

All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it an offence to kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. In addition to this, for some rarer species (listed on Schedule 1 of the Act), it is an offence to disturb them while they are nest building or at or near a nest with eggs or young, or to disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

A number of bird species are also listed as Species of Principal Importance under the provisions of the NERC Act 2006. The National Planning Policy Network document 'ODPM Circular 06/2005' gives guidance on the treatment of Species of Principal Importance and states that local authorities should ensure that they are protected from the adverse effects of development, where appropriate, by using planning conditions or obligations.

A wren was seen flying from a gap in the stonework, and some of the gaps on the building are large enough to be suitable for birds to nest in.

As such, work on the building should preferably be undertaken outside the nesting season for birds (February to September inclusive).

If this is not possible, then an appropriately experienced ecologist should check the gaps suitable for nesting birds immediately prior to work commencing.

If nesting birds are found to be present at this time, then all work likely to cause a disturbance to the birds should cease until the young have fledged and the nest is no longer in use.

SUMMARY

- Dusk emergence surveys were carried out on a building at Waterside, Buxworth by surveyors from MG Wildlife on the 13th and 27th September 2012.
- No bats were seen entering or exiting the building on either occasion, although bats were active within the vicinity of the building.
- As such, bats are not considered to pose a constraint to the proposed development of the building.
- However, bats can inhabit buildings at any time. As a precaution contractors should be made aware of the possibility, albeit unlikely, that bats may be present during work on the buildings.
- In the unlikely event that a bat is found during work on the building, all work should cease and an appropriately licensed ecologist and/or Natural England should be contacted as a European Protected Species licence may be required for work to continue
- While there was no evidence found of the current or historic presence of nesting birds, a wren was seen flying from a gap in the stonework of the building and there are features of the building suitable for nesting birds.
- Work should preferably be undertaken outside the nesting season for birds (February to September inclusive)
- If this is not possible, then an appropriately experienced ecologist should check the gaps suitable for nesting birds immediately prior to work commencing.
- If nesting birds are found to be present at this time, work likely to cause disturbance should cease until the young have fledged and the nest is no longer in use.

REFERENCES

Bat Conservation Trust (2012).

Bat Surveys - good practice guidelines (2nd Edition). Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004).

Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough.