DAYTIME BAT SURVEY AT ASHMOUNT, CHAPEL ROAD, WHALEY BRIDGE, DERBYSHIRE

2015

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2015 by Emma Woods to undertake a daytime bat survey of a residential property at Ashmount, Chapel Road, Whaley Bridge. The site will be the subject of a planning application for the demolition of the property and the construction of a newly constructed dwelling in its place.

1.2 Ashmount is located in Whaley Bridge, High Peak, Derbyshire to the south-east of the town centre (O.S. grid reference: SK02128030). The property is a detached 'bungalow' dwelling of brick construction, with a pitched slate-tiled roof.

1.3 The site is positioned alongside a similar large, detached property with mature gardens, outside of Whaley Bridge town centre. The property is surrounded in the wider environment by a wooded disused quarry to the rear, and farmland adjacent and opposite, offering some foraging and commuting opportunities for bats.

1.4 Biodiversity is a material consideration to the planning process and consideration must be given to protected species. The proposed works to the existing residential property at Ashmount will be destructive and therefore consideration should be given to roosting bats and other protected and notable species, which could potentially utilise the property.

1.5 All bat species are European Protected Species under the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994, updated and consolidated by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. They are also fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. It is illegal to disturb or damage a bat roost whether or not there are bats present.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 A daytime bat survey of Ashmount was undertaken to search for, and to assess the potential for, a bat roost to be present within the building.

2.2 An external survey was carried out, which included, for example, looking for gaps between any soffit boards and walls, gaps between window frames and the walls, and looking for bat droppings on the walls and window ledges.

2.3 The building was also searched internally for evidence of a bat roost, which included looking for the following signs:

- live or dead bats
- bat droppings
- bat entry/exit points
- bat urine staining
- grease marks on any timbers
- feeding remains such as insect wings
- areas clear of cobwebs.

2.4 A pair of close-focussing binoculars, a high-powered torch and an endoscope were used (where required) to search for evidence of bats externally and internally.

Personnel and Timing

2.5 Rachel Hacking (Principal Ecologist) and Joel Hacking carried out the daytime bat survey on the 24th March 2015. Rachel has over fourteen years of experience in ecological surveys. Joel is an active member of the Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group and is working towards a Natural England class survey licence for bats. Both surveyors are fully experienced in protected species surveys. The weather on the day of the survey was dry and cool.

Survey constraints

2.6 Daytime bat surveys can be undertaken at any time of year. The whole property could be surveyed internally and externally, therefore, there were no constraints to the survey.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 The existing property is a detached one-storey dwelling, of brick construction, with a pitched slate tiled roof. It is a well maintained building, which is not currently being lived in. A wooden lean-to is attached to the rear of the property. This is of timber construction with a sheet plastic roof.

3.2 The brick and pebbledash external walls and external chimneys are in excellent condition (see Photographs 1, and the front cover of this report). Where lead flashing occurs, between the roofs, chimney stacks and the brickwork, this is flush to the walls and does not provide any potential roosting opportunities for bats. The windows, doors and frames are in excellent condition.

3.3 The brickwork and the pebbledash are in excellent condition and complete. The property has gable ends with equal pitch. At each gable, the roof and external walls are sealed with cement, which is intact, and none of the gable ends provide access opportunities for bats (see Photograph 1).

Photograph 1 showing north-western gable end of the property

3.4 The roof is pitched throughout and the square roof tiles and slate ridge tiles (see Photographs 2 and 3) are in very good condition. No disrepair or gaps within the roof tiles are visible. The ridge tiles were complete, therefore no opportunities exist which would provide entry points for bats into features which are commonly used for roosting i.e. into the roof space and/or behind roof tiles/clay ridge tiles.

Photograph 2 showing northern-facing rear of the property

Photograph 3 showing the rear of the property, including the roof

3.5 Wooden soffit boards and bargeboards are present throughout the exterior of the property. These are all in good condition, with no visible gaps providing access to the roof space (see Photograph 4). They are not completely flush to the external walls due to the curvature of the

brickwork, but were sealed and any minor gaps were covered in cobwebs, suggesting no bat access.

Photograph 4 showing the wooden soffit boxes and barge boards in good condition

3.6 A timber frame lean-to exists to the rear of the property. This was in poor overall condition with a sheet plastic roof, providing no roosting opportunities for bats (see Photograph 5). To the rear of the property there exists a wooden storage shed, but this provides no roosting opportunity for bats (see photograph 6). No evidence of bat activity was found on the property exterior.

Photograph 5 showing wooden frame lean-to at the rear of the property

Photograph 6 showing wooden shed at the rear of the property.

3.7 Internally, the building is well maintained and still divided into rooms. There are no opportunities for a bat roost in the property living spaces.

3.8 The loft space is open, completely accessible and was inspected thoroughly. The loft space spans the width of the entire property and is approximately 7m long by 3m wide and 2m high, with exposed wooden beams and traditional bitumen underfelt (see Photograph 7). The loft space has been well maintained and fully insulated.

Photograph 7 showing internal view of loft space

3.9 The roofing felt is flush to the roof tiles and to the joists, with some tearing in the felt at the apex, but with no visible gaps or daylight (see Photograph 8). There were odd tears in the roof lining but otherwise no access for bats through the roof tiles. No cracks could be found within the woodwork. The roof space is well sealed, with minor daylight visible where the roof joists meet the external bargeboards. The roof space had considerable cobwebbing throughout, suggesting no recent bat activity.

Photograph 8 showing the good condition of the roof felt and joists

3.10 The central chimney stack was in good condition, with no visible gaps for bat access. The loft also had one timber frame window, to the north west of the property. This gable end had a more recent breeze block construction, with the opposite gable being older brickwork (see Photograph 9). There was no mortar missing from either gable end, and there was wooden flooring throughout with the appropriate insulation. The walls are double skin (two layers of brick) with no cavity.

Photograph 9 showing the chimney stack and brickwork gable end

3.11 During the external and internal survey, no evidence of recent bat activity could be located. The property provides negligible entry or exit points for bats.

3.12 The property sits in mature gardens with mature Leylandii shrubs (see front cover photo). These were inspected and found to support no cavities, or other features which could be used by bats.

3.13 The access track to the property is lined with mature trees, some of which were clad in Ivy (see Photograph 10). These trees may support features which could be used by bats. These trees, however, will not be affected by the current planning application proposals.

Photograph 10 showing an ivy-clad tree to the rear of the property

4.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 No evidence of bat activity could be located during the survey at Ashmount, Whaley Bridge. The entire building could be surveyed.

4.2 The property has been well maintained and is in very good condition. Negligible opportunities exist for bats to enter or exit the property. The external roofs and brickwork are in excellent condition. The roof space is well sealed. The Leylandii shrubs within the grounds of the property do not support features which could be used by bats.

4.3 The property does not support other protected species such as nesting birds. The mature shrubs within the grounds have the potential to support nesting birds but no nesting activity was recorded during the survey. Further information on the surrounding land can be found in the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey report (Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited 2015).

4.4 It is the opinion of the author of this report that demolition and construction can proceed without the need for further survey work (e.g. activity surveys) or bat mitigation due to the limited potential of the property to support bats. However, if the development works are delayed by longer than two years from the date of this survey, a further bat survey will be required to update the findings.

4.5 It should be noted that bat absence is very difficult to prove definitively due to their mobility and size, and single or small numbers of bats are able to roost in extremely small spaces, such as between roofing tiles. Therefore it is recommended that all removal of roof slates and ridge tiles is to be undertaken with care, with the features lifted instead of dragged where possible.

4.6 **If during development works a bat (or an accumulation of bat droppings) is discovered at any time, work is to temporarily cease whilst an experienced bat ecologist is contacted for guidance and assistance**. This can be Rachel Hacking Ecology (0161 427 3548) who undertook the initial survey, any licensed bat worker, or the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) helpline (0845 1300 228).

4.7 A general recommendation for any development, would be to erect bat boxes onto any new dwelling, to increase the roosting opportunities for bats in the locality.

REFERENCES

Hundt, L. (2012). *Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines, 2nd Edition*. Bat Conservation Trust.

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