CSA environmental

Buxton Caravan Club Site,
Derbyshire

Preliminary Roost Assessment for Bats

Prepared by
CSA Environmental

on behalf of
The Caravan Club

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Demolition of the existing toilet block and construction of a new building is proposed at the Buxton Caravan Club Site, Derbyshire, for which detailed planning permission will be sought.

CSA Environmental was instructed by The Caravan Club to undertake a preliminary roost assessment of the existing toilet block to identify its potential to support roosting bats, such that the need for further survey work to determine the presence/likely absence and character of any such roost may be considered.

The internal building inspection of the toilet did not reveal any evidence to suggest bats are accessing and/or roosting within the roof space. There were limited access opportunities for bats found during the external inspection, which were generally blocked by metal mesh.

An inspection of the external structure found the building to be in a good state of repair, lacking external features which could be exploited by crevice-dwelling species. It was concluded that roosting bats are likely absent from the structure.

The Buxton and Grin Low Country Park and SSSI lies to the immediate north and east of the caravan site and is known to support winter and summer roosts of rarer bat species, and optimal foraging habitat. A sensitive lighting strategy is recommended to prevent any disturbance to local bat populations. It is also recommended that on-site roosting opportunities for bats be enhanced through incorporation of features into the new toilet block.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The following report sets out the findings of a Preliminary Roost Assessment for bats at the toilet block of Buxton Caravan Club site, Derbyshire (hereafter referred to as, 'the Site'). This report will accompany a planning application for the site, where proposals will include the demolition of the existing toilet block and construction of a new block.

1.2 The assessment was undertaken by CSA Environmental on 10 November 2016 on behalf of The Caravan Club and comprised an internal and external inspection to identify any evidence of bats or their activity, and any features which may be exploited for roosting.

1.3 The Site lies to the South of Buxton town, with a central grid reference of approximately SK 04795 72154. The immediate landscape consists of Buxton and Grin Low Country Park, including broadleaved deciduous woodland immediately adjacent to the north and east, plantation woodland and the A53 to the west. Sheep grazed grassland and moors, with isolated pockets of woodland, extend to the south.

1.4 Semi-natural habitats within the Site are predominately amenity grassland, ornamental planting and tree belts. Site buildings include the toilet block to be demolished, as well as a Warden's office, reception and storage.

2.0 LEGISLATION AND LICENSING

Legislation

2.1 All species of British bats are legally protected under part 3 (section 41) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. These Regulations make it an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Deliberately disturb bats, impairing their ability to survive, breed, reproduce or rear/nurture their young;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place used by bats; or
- Be in possession of, transport, sell, exchange or offer to sell/exchange a bat (dead or alive) or any part of a bat.

2.2 All bats and their roosts in England, Scotland and Wales were originally protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. Subsequent amendments to the legislation for England and Wales has removed bats from most of the provisions of the Act, however it remains an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection; or
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place that a bat uses for shelter or protection.

2.3 Disturbance of bats is covered by both the 2010 Regulations and the 1981 Act, with the magnitude of disturbance critical. Disturbance that impairs survival or successful reproduction would be covered by the Regulations with no legal defence existing. Less significant acts of disturbance may only be covered by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, which includes some legal defences that may be applied in certain circumstances.

2.4 It is important to note that bat roosts are protected throughout the year, regardless of whether or not bats are present at the time. Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations the offence of damaging or destroying a breeding site or resting place of bats is not subject to any legal defence, i.e. an offence will have been committed even if the damage or destruction occurs accidentally.

Licensing

2.5 Where development is proposed that would result in an offence under the Habitats and Species Regulations a European Protected Species (EPS) licence needs to be granted by the appropriate authority (Natural England in England) to permit an act that would otherwise be unlawful.

This provides for a specific derogation from the legislation, to prevent a legal infringement occurring. To obtain an EPS licence for development it must be demonstrated that the purpose of the act to be licensed is for:

"*preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment*" (Regulation 53(2)(e))

2.6 In addition Natural England will not grant an EPS licence unless they are satisfied that:

- "*There is no satisfactory alternative*" (Regulation 53(9)(a)); and
- "*The action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range*" (Regulation 53(9)(b)).

3.0 METHODS

Preliminary Roost Assessment

3.1 The toilet block was surveyed on 10 November 2016 by Cerian Thomas Grad CIEEM and Tom Preece. The survey included a bat assessment comprising a detailed internal and external inspection of the buildings using a ladder, high powered torch and close-focusing binoculars, as appropriate, to look for signs of, and potential features for, roosting bats.

3.2 External inspection focused on identifying potential bat access points to the interior of the structure, and any external features that could potentially be used as roost sites by crevice-dwelling species. Particular attention was paid to soffit boxes, barge boards, raised tiles and lead flashing; locations where bat roosting may often be identified.

3.3 Internal inspection involved a systematic search for bats or any evidence of their activity, in particular droppings and/or feeding remains.

3.4 Please note that a structure's bat roost potential is influenced by its age and construction, thermal stability, lighting, levels of human activity and proximity to foraging habitat – particularly woodland, parkland and wetland. The assessment of bat roost potential is used to determine whether or not further surveys are required, and if they are, the level of survey effort appropriate to determine the presence or likely absence of roosting bats.

3.5 There were no significant limitations such as weather or access affecting the assessment.

4.0 RESULTS

Preliminary Roost Assessment

4.1 The single story toilet block was estimated to have been built c. 30 years ago, when the Site opened. The building was found to be of red brick construction, with gravel rendering and timber framed windows and doors. The roof was a hipped, softwood-trussed structure, with traditional bitumen felt lining, thick clay tiles and seven chimney flues. The structure is in present use (although the Site and toilet block are closed for the winter in early November).

4.2 The internal inspections found the roof void to be a simple trussed structure, housing 14 water tanks and associated pipework. The water system had been drained at the time of survey for closure over the winter months, however based on experience the system would have likely kept the roof void very warm during the spring and summer months. The majority of the floor was boarded, except for the far western end, with fibreglass insulation underneath, and thus much of the roof space could be searched thoroughly for evidence of bats. The floor was found to be generally very clean with no sign of bat or rodent droppings, and no sign of droppings was found on top of water tanks. The bitumen felt lining was generally in good condition. Points of light were seen at the eaves around much of the roof - these were in most cases blocked by a metal mesh to prevent bird nesting, however the gaps did in places afford potential access points for bats. However, following a thorough search no evidence of roosting bats was found within the roof void. The roof contained strip lighting along the ridge and is likely subject to some disturbance during the Site's active season.

4.3 The external inspection of the toilet block found the thick clay roof tiles to be in good condition and well-sealed, with significant moss growth. A horizontal slit was present in the panelling above all timber window frames, corresponding to the potential roof void access points cited above, with the internal metal mesh preventing access in most cases. Gaps were present where pipework emerges from the eaves; some were heavily covered by cobwebbing, and one showed signs of use by nesting birds. No potential roost features were identified in the external structure.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Assessment of Bat Evidence

5.1 The internal and external inspections revealed limited access opportunities into the roof space overall with minor gaps at the eaves, and this was largely blocked by metal mesh. No evidence of bat activity was identified within the roof void, following a thorough search. The roof structure was otherwise well sealed, and no suitable external roost features were identified.

5.2 With reference to Table 4.1 of the BCT Best Practice Guidelines[1], it is concluded that the toilet block has a negligible potential to support roosting bats

Recommendations

5.3 Roosting bats have been concluded to be likely absent from the toilet block, therefore no further bat roost surveys are recommended. Given the evidence of bird nesting activity identified during the survey, it is recommended that removal of the toilet block take place outside the bird nesting season (generally March through August) or immediately following a nesting bird check by an appropriately qualified ecologist.

5.4 It should be noted that Poole's Cavern and Grin Low Wood SSSI lies c. 135m to the east and north of the Site. This is designated for geological and botanical interest, but is also known to support significant roosting activity by several *Myotis* bat species. As the off-site SSSI supports rarer species of bat, it would be recommended to adopt a sensitive lighting strategy around the new toilet building to prevent any increase in disturbance to local bat populations.

5.5 In order to enhance opportunities for roosting bats within the Site, it is recommended that bat boxes be erected on the replacement toilet block. It is recommended that two Schwegler 1FR Bat Tubes are incorporated into the new building, preferentially built into the fabric of the building, to ensure long term provision. Boxes should be installed at gable ends just below eaves level on south-west to south-east elevations where possible, and not directly above windows or doors.

[1] Collins, J. (ed.)(2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn.). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Appendix A

Photosheet

Plate 1. The toilet block with hipped clay tiled roof, grey rendering and chimney flues

Plate 2. Gaps around base of chimney flues

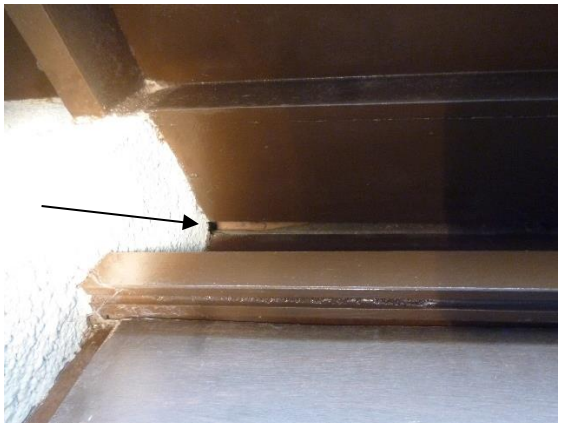

Plate 3. Gaps at eaves above wooden windows into roof space, mostly covered by metal mesh

Plate 4. Gaps around pipe work as it leaves the roof at the eaves

Plate 5. Internal inspection, water tanks, pipework and clean floor boarding

Plate 6. Bitumen felt lining with wire mesh at eaves.

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