



The Oddfellows Arms
Higham on the Hill

Updating Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

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Project Number: GE0624



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Quality Management

Client	A.R.Cartwright Ltd.
Project	The Oddfellows Arms
Report Title	Updating Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment
Project No	GE0624
Status	Draft
Date	29 th February 2024
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Griffin Ecology Ltd. has been appointed by the client to undertake an updating Preliminary Roost Assessment of the Oddfellows Public House in Higham on the Hill. A previous full planning application (20/00153/FUL) for the demolition of the public house had been withdrawn. This new application will seek the retention and conversion of this existing building for residential use.

The ecological surveys and comments made in relation to the previous application have been considered within this report.

For the purposes of this report the “site” refers to the land within the red line boundary as illustrated by Figure 1.



Figure 1: Site Location

This report seeks to provide an updated understanding of the potential for the subject building to support roosting bats and nesting birds. As well as identify whether further survey effort is required to understand the ecological impacts which may result from the proposals.

As this report seeks to provide an update to the previous Preliminary Roost Appraisal, this report should be read in conjunction with the previous reports (PEA Report & Bat emergence Survey Report – GUMA Ltd., 2019 & 2020).

1.2 Site description

The site (grid references: SP 38014 95450) comprises a disused public house building set within the associated curtilage, carparking and beer garden. The site is enclosed by fencing excluding public access. To the rear of the site is a grassland parcel with a pond, identified as a candidate Local Wildlife Site. The surrounding rural landscape is made up of a mosaic of residential dwellings and farmland interspersed by small pockets of woodland.

1.3 Survey Purpose

The purpose of this updated survey is to gain an updated understanding of the potential for the site to support roosting bats and nesting birds as well as determine the need for any further surveys to fully understand the likely ecological impacts resulting from the proposals. This will aim to set out a suitable avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement strategy with the aim of maintaining favourable conservation status with respect to bats and nesting birds.

The objectives of the survey and this assessment are to:

- Assess potential presence / likely absence of roosting bats within the building to be impacted;
- Assess any impacts that the proposals may have on any roosting and foraging / commuting bats;
- Determine, where possible, the need for a Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licence;
- Assess the potential for usage of the building by nesting birds.
- Inform any avoidance and mitigation measures, if required.

1.4 Proposals

Planning permission is sought for the conversion of the existing public house into two residential units as well as the construction of a further five residential units on site.

1.5 Relevant Legislation

A number of UK and European legislations and policies deal with the conservation of biodiversity. Below is listed a brief outline of the legal and policy protection afforded to bats and nesting birds.

Bats and their roost sites are protected under UK and European legislation including the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Habitats Directive. This legislation makes it an offence for any person to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb bats, where that disturbance may affect the ability of those bats to survive, breed, rear or nurture their young, or is likely to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of any bat species, whether in a roost or not.
- Damage or destroy a place of shelter (roost) of a bat, be that a resting or breeding place.
- Possess a bat, whole or in part, alive or dead.
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a roost
- Sell or offer for sale or exchange whole or parts of bats, alive or dead.

When interpreting the relevant legislation within context it is important to acknowledge that bat roosts are protected throughout the year, regardless of whether or not bats are present at the time. Under the Regulations, the offence of damaging or destroying a breeding site or resting place of bats is subject to strict liability, i.e. an offence will have been committed even if the damage or destruction occurs accidentally.

Where development will result in an offence under the above legislation a suitable derogation licence needs to be obtained from Natural 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.

All species of birds are protected from disturbance under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) from the time when they begin nest construction until all of the young have naturally fledged and are no longer reliant on the nest. Barn owls benefit from additional protection under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), making it an offence to capture, kill or disturb barn owls at all times.

2. Methodology

2.1. Desk Study

An updated biological record search has been undertaken by Leicestershire & Rutland Environmental Records Centre (LRERC). This search sought to gain an updated understanding of historic records held for protected and notable species within a 1 km radius of the site.

The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website has also been accessed for information on notable habitats and statutory designated sites, as well as granted EPS licence applications within a 5 km radius of the site.

The following ecological reports were reviewed as part of a desk-based study:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, GUMA 2020
- Bat Emergence Survey, Guma 2019

2.2. Updating Preliminary Roost Assessment

The site has been visited by a suitably experienced and licensed surveyor, Casey Griffin (Principal Ecologist, MCIEEM, level 2 bat survey licence: 2016-23916) on Monday 19th February 2024. Weather conditions at the time of survey have been recorded.

The updated inspection of the subject building included a search for suitable bat roosting features with an assessment made as to the potential value to bats in accordance with Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines 4th edition (BCT, 2023). The inspection was aided by a one million candlepower torch, extendable ladders, binoculars and a rigid endoscope where suitable for detailed inspections of accessible areas.

Bat evidence: The building has been systematically searched for evidence of bats including:
Live or dead bats, droppings, staining and feeding remains.

Evaluation of roosting suitability:

The building has been assessed for suitability to support roosting bats as well as the likely species, roost type and numbers of bat the building could support.

Following a systematic survey of the building and consideration of possible factors it will be assessed as having negligible, low, moderate or high suitability for roosting bats, in accordance with the BCT guidelines.

Nesting bird evidence:

The building has been searched for evidence of bird nesting activity such as active or historic nests. In addition the building has been searched for evidence of activity such as bird droppings, splashings and pellets.

2.3. Survey limitation

The baseline conditions reported and assessed within this document represent those identified at the time of the survey.

Third party desk study data is not exhaustive, and an absence or a negative result of a species does not indicate the absence of protected species from the site/search area. This assessment is based on a review of available historical information (relating to this site), environmental records, site visits, consultations, relevant guidance information, and reports from third parties. All information received has been taken in good faith as being true and representative.

3. Results

3.1 Desk Study

Higham on the Hill, Oddfellows Field Candidate Local Wildlife site is present within 10m to the north of the proposed site boundary. This non-statutory designation is known to support species diverse grassland habitat and a man-made pond. Previous eDNA surveys of the pond, undertaken by Griffin Ecology, in relation to a separate application, have confirmed the likely absence of great crested newt.

The data search by LRERC has confirmed the presence of common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctule*) and a Myotis species within the 1km search radius.

The previous ecology reports had identified the disused public house building to offer “low” suitability for use by roosting bats. In accordance with the recommendations of this report, a further dusk emergence survey was undertaken in August 2019. This further identified no bats to have emerged from any part of the building during the survey.

However, during the survey a small number of common pipistrelle were recorded foraging in the surrounding garden. Pipistrelle bats are the most common species of bats in the UK with widespread distributions (BCT, 2010). During the dusk survey the earliest common pipistrelle was recorded 10 minutes after sunset. Pipistrelle bats typically emerge around 20-30 minutes after sunset but also sometimes before sunset (Jones & Walsh, 2001). The time that activity was first recorded indicates that the roost of the earliest bat recorded on site is likely to be located in the immediate surrounding area.

3.2 Updated Preliminary Roost Assessment

The site was visited by suitably experienced and licensed surveyor Casey Griffin (Principal Ecologist, MCIEEM, level 2 bat survey licence: 2016-23916 CLS - CLS) on the 19th February 2024.

3.2.1 Weather Conditions

The weather conditions recorded during the site visit are as follows:

Table 1: Weather conditions at the time of the survey

Parameter	Recorded Figure
Temperature	10°C
Cloud cover	10%
Precipitation	None
Wind speed (Beaufort scale)	2

The subject building is spread over three levels and constructed in brick with a part rendered finish. Single storey, flat roof extensions are present to the rear of the original building. The main roof is gabled and finished with slates. Brick chimneys are present to each gable end. The single storey extensions have an asphalt finish, timber fascia and soffit boards.



Single storey extensions



Gable verge

The internal configuration of the building remains the same as previous surveys. However, plywood boarding to the ground floor windows creates a generally darker internal space. Access into the cellar is limited to a closed internal door and sealed external hatch.



Internal view cellar

The external assessment confirmed the building to remain in a similar condition to that observed in 2019, with the exception of some recent damage relating to vandalism. This damage included a newly created hole within the flat roof, where the building was entered, as well as an area of damage to a further portion of flat roof to the rear.



Damage to flat roof

A small roof void is present above part of the roof space within the gabled portion of the building. The remainder of this roof space is vaulted.



Small roof void with sarking



Vaulted ceiling

The updating inspection has revealed no evidence of bat use or occupation such as droppings, staining or feeding remains. The slate roof finish remains in a similar condition to that observed in 2019. This updating survey included an aerial inspection of the building by light-weight drone. This has further revealed potential bat access opportunities around one of the chimneys as well as around the area of damaged flat roof. Both these additional features are generally exposed and would likely be subject to rain-water ingress.



Gaps in brick chimney – Aerial view

The cellar continues to provide a dark, sheltered and humid environment suitable for bat hibernation with shallow crevices provided within the internal brickwork that provide potential perching opportunities. However, the absence of any access into this portion of the building greatly limits its suitability for use by bats.

Bats would also be provided access to a limited gap behind the timber fascia board and where access is possible into the shallow cavity present between the slate roof finish and the sarking below.

When re-assessing the subject building in line with the Bat Conservation Trust's "Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, Good Practice Guidelines" (Collins, 2023) and considering Table 4.1 which attributes suitability for bat roosting based on features offered and habitat present within the locality, the building is still considered to offer **low suitability** to support bat roosting.

Nesting birds:

The intrusive inspection of the building has revealed no evidence of bird nesting activity. The building does provide suitable bird nesting opportunities where species such as house sparrow are able to gain access into the shallow cavity associated with the slate roof finish and the sarking below. A precautionary approach to works should be adopted to ensure no nesting birds are impacted by the proposals.

4. Conclusion

The conclusions drawn within the GUMA reports of 2019 and 2020 remain valid and appropriate given the current conditions provided within the subject building.

The new proposals, put forward in this application, will seek to retain the original building which will be converted for residential use. With the building continuing to offer "low" suitability, potential for summer bat roosting remains and in accordance with good practice the previous bat emergence survey, undertaken in 2019, should be updated prior to the start of works. Any recommendation, following this updated survey should be implemented in full.

Any disturbing works must be carried out sensitively to ensure that nesting birds, should they be present, are not disturbed. Ideally, potentially disturbing works should be timed to avoid the main nesting season (March to September

inclusive), or alternatively disturbing works to the building should be immediately preceded by a nesting bird check by a suitably qualified ecologist and following any recommendations made as a result of this check. If nesting birds are found to be present prior to or during works a suitable buffer of no disturbance must be maintained around the nest(s) until all of the young have naturally fledged and are no longer dependent on the nest. Replacement nesting opportunities should then be provided post development to ensure nesting opportunities are not permanently lost.

The habitats on site are currently subject to levels of artificial light filtration from existing lighting provided by the neighbouring buildings. No external lighting is proposed, however should this not be the case any proposed lighting both during works and permanent lighting once the proposed has been completed should be LED type within the warm-white spectrum and cowed to direct light towards the ground and away from potential bat foraging, commuting and roosting areas including adjacent grassland. Any security lighting will be agreed with the appointed ecologist prior to the commencement of activity on site.

Opportunities for biodiversity enhancements

In line with the NPPF and local planning policy, effort on site should be made to secure an overall enhancement in biodiversity post development. This can most easily be achieved through the inclusion of integrated features for roosting bats and nesting birds within both the converted building as well as the further proposed residential units.

An enhancement strategy should be prepared to include the provision of enhanced bat roosting and bird nesting opportunities within the proposed built area. These measures should include the allocation of a number and range of integrated bat roosting and bird nesting features. All artificial features must be retained in perpetuity and their exact location/ specification may be discussed with a suitably qualified ecologist when alternative options can be considered

5. References

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