ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
SOUTHLANDS RESIDENTIAL HOME, BRIDGERULE

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COMMISSIONED BY DR THANWEER FARQUHAR

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NATURAL ENGLAND BAT LICENCE (NO. 2015-11493-CLS-CLS)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- J.L Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Dr Thanweer Farquhar to carry out an Ecological Impact Assessment at Southlands Residential Home, Bridgerule, Devon, EX22 7EW.

- The survey was commissioned to inform any possible ecological impacts resulting from a planning application to extend the property; and was carried out on the 12th November 2020 by Joseph Lane BSc [Hons], who is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and holder of a Natural England bat licence.

- Survey methodology comprised an internal and external building inspection.

- A scattering of droppings characteristic of brown long-eared bat was present within the main roof void situated beneath the apex of the roof; no bats were observed during the survey and no inaccessible crevice dwelling opportunities were identified.

- Dedicated mitigation will ensure that the proposed works will not affect the favourable conservation status of any local bat population. The roof void and wall-top access points will be retained; no lighting will spill onto any bat access / exit points and 'dark' flight corridors to and from the roost will be maintained.

- As a precaution, commencements of works will be preceded by an internal survey of the main roof void by a licensed bat ecologist; if the existing roof lining [of the main roof] is disturbed it should be replaced with a traditional bitumen felt-lining, with the western elevation [to be extended] temporarily partitioned off leaving the eastern section of the roof void undisturbed.

- All contractors will be made aware that bats utilise the building and the legislation relevant to this; in the unlikely event a bat is discovered all work in the vicinity will cease and a licensed bat ecologist consulted. On completion of works the partition will be removed allowing free access to the entire void once again.

- No signs of nesting birds were associated with the building.

INTRODUCTION

J.L Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Dr Thanweer Farquhar to carry out an Ecological Impact Assessment at Southlands Residential Home, Bridgerule, Devon, EX22 7EW.

The survey was commissioned to inform any possible ecological impacts resulting from a planning application to extend the property; and was carried out on the 12th November 2020 by Joseph Lane BSc [Hons], who is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and holder of a Natural England bat licence.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The survey area comprised a section of stone-built residential home with a felt-lined slate roof. The property was situated on the eastern edge of Bridgerule; the wider landscape was dominated by pasture and woodland set within a hedgebank network.


Figures 1 & 2. Property viewed from the east [existing single-storey extension to be continued northwards]; and western elevation to incorporate two-storey extension [right]

The site is located at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference SS 279 027.

METHODOLOGY

DESK STUDY

A desktop data search to identify statutory designated sites and records of protected species within 1km of the site was carried out using the government's MAGIC *Nature on the Map* website. Aerial photographs were also interpreted.

BATS

BUILDING INSPECTION:

A daytime site visit was carried out to identify potential roost sites associated with the building to be affected by the proposed development. The exterior and interior of the building were examined for signs of occupation by bats (urine staining, fur rubbing and droppings) and suitable crevices and features noted. *A high-powered torch, endoscope and ladder were available*.

BIRDS

The exterior and interior of the building were surveyed for signs of use by nesting birds.

LIMITATIONS

It should be noted that this survey takes no account of seasonal differences and a lack of signs of any particular species does not confirm its absence, merely that there was no indication of its presence at the time of survey.

If no action or development of this land takes place within twelve months of the date of this survey, then the findings of this survey will no longer be considered reliable and should be repeated.

RESULTS

DESK STUDY

No statutory sites were situated within 1km of SS 279 027; the building falls within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone but does not match any corresponding development descriptions.

BATS

BUILDING INSPECTION

A scattering of droppings characteristic of brown long-eared bat was present within the main roof void situated beneath the apex of the roof; no bats were observed during the survey and no inaccessible crevice dwelling opportunities were identified. Bat access points were present along the eastern elevation wall-top.


Figures 3 & 4. Bat access points along the eastern elevation wall-top will be retained and unaffected by proposals [left]; interior view of roof void

BIRDS

No signs of nesting birds were associated with the building.

LEGISLATION AND SPECIES INFORMATION

BATS

All bat species and their roost sites are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended and are included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 and amended by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (Amendment) Regulations 2007 (the Habitats Regulations). Under UK law a bat roost is "any structure or place which any wild [bat]...uses for shelter or protection". As bats tend to reuse the same roosts, legal opinion is that a roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the time. Microchiroptera (the insectivorous species of bat found in the UK) are able to exploit a wide diversity of roost sites such as caves, trees, tunnels, mines and buildings. Species which have adapted to utilise buildings as alternative roost sites make use of various parts of the building including hollow walls, roof spaces and areas above soffit boarding, behind weatherboarding and under hanging tiles; habitats which can be replicated when designing mitigation measures. It is important to note that individual roosts are not usually occupied all year round, as bat colonies move frequently (depending upon the species). The same site, however, does tend to be occupied at the same time each year.

RECOMMENDATION AND MITIGATION

DESK STUDY

No statutory sites would be affected by the proposals.

BATS

A scattering of droppings characteristic of brown long-eared bat was present within the main roof void situated beneath the apex of the roof; no bats were observed during the survey and no inaccessible crevice dwelling opportunities were identified.

The mitigation detailed below is such that *favourable conservation status* will not be compromised.

MITIGATION

The roof void and wall-top access points will be retained; no lighting will spill onto any bat access / exit points and 'dark' flight corridors to and from the roost will be maintained.

As a precaution, commencements of works will be preceded by an internal survey of the main roof void by a licensed bat ecologist; if the existing roof lining [of the main roof] is disturbed it should be replaced with a traditional bitumen felt-lining, with the western elevation [to be extended] temporarily partitioned off leaving the eastern section of the roof void undisturbed.

All contractors will be made aware that bats utilise the building and the legislation relevant to this; in the unlikely event a bat is discovered all work in the vicinity will cease and a licensed bat ecologist consulted. On completion of works the partition will be removed allowing free access to the entire void once again.

Figure 5. Aerial showing location of temporary internal partition, ensuring the void [and access points] remain undisturbed during construction

BIRDS

No nesting birds would be affected by the proposed works.

External elevations have the potential to incorporate bat & bird boxes; such features would enhance the potential ecological value of the site.

Figures 6 & 7. Indicative bat and bird box types

Figure 8. Swift eaves box [double] - Peat boxes.co.uk

APPENDIX – NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.

Below are exerts within the NPPF of how the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

Paragraph 170

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

Paragraph 174

To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity56; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation57; and
b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Paragraph 175

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:
a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons58 and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Paragraph 176

The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:
a) potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;
b) listed or proposed Ramsar sites59; and
c) sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

Paragraph 177

The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment because of its potential impact on a habitats site is being planned or determined.

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