

Tendring District Council – Planning and Ecology teams

cc. Alistair Davidson Architect, Roger Balmer Design

Date: 1 October 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

Variation of Condition - Shirburn Mill, Lawford, Essex

Planning permission (Ref: 18/00096/FUL) and Listed Building Consent (Ref: 18/00097/LBC) was granted by Tendring District Council (TDC) for the erection of a detached 2 storey dwelling and single storey cart lodge as well as repair to the existing and conversion of the mill to a residential annex on the 11 December 2018. The decision notices included conditions 16 and 17 that relate to ecology as follows:

- Condition 16 requires the submission of a bat licence prior to erection of scaffolding as well as the need for an aerial endoscope survey of 5 trees identified by Eco-planning (2018) as supporting potential bat roosts prior to felling. Should bats be encountered then the felling works would need a bat licence.
- Condition 17 requires a Great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) survey prior to any works commencing and the submission of a mitigation strategy to TDC for approval if GCNs are recorded during the surveys.

MHE Consulting Ltd were instructed to carry out an internal inspection and subsequent dusk emergence survey of the mill to provide an update to a previous survey undertaken by Eco-Planning on the 17 October 2017. This letter report outlines the survey methodology and results of that survey in order to inform a Variation of Condition application to be submitted to TDC relating to Condition 16 so that some minor works exterior to the mill can be undertaken to start the planning permission before it expires

Methodology

Preliminary Roost Assessment

The existing dwelling was assessed for Bat Roosting Potential (BRP) with reference to NE's Bat Mitigation Guidelines (Mitchell-Jones, 2004) and the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) "Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd edition" (Collins, 2016). Evidence of roosting bats was recorded if observed.

Dusk emergence survey

The dusk emergence survey was undertaken as per the following methodology:

- The emergence survey commenced 15 minutes prior to and for up to 1.5 hours after sunset to cover the main emergence period and when some bats may return to the roost;
- Bat activity such as bats leaving or returning to roost within buildings on site was recorded. In addition, commuting bats and foraging bats were recorded; and
- Numbers and species of bats were recorded to determine the significance of any roosts identified.
- A FLIR Scion thermal scope (Plate 1) was used to monitor the south and south and east elevations of the mill and 3 ecologists with Elekon Batlogger and Wildlife Acoustic Echo Meter Pro full spectrum detectors observed the east, north and south elevations.

Surveyors

The PRA was undertaken by Christian Whiting BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM who has over 20 years' experience working as an ecologist. He holds Natural England (NE) survey licences for bats (2015-14745-CLS-CLS - Bat Survey Level 2, barn owl (CL29/00213), and great crested newts (Class A licence 2015-17633-CLS-CLS). He is a Registered Consultant (Registration RC089) on NE's Bat Low Impact Class Licence. He is an agent under the Environment Agency's and IDB water vole organisational and class licences respectively. His main areas of expertise are bats, vascular plants, amphibians and reptiles, otter (*Lutra lutra*) and water vole.

Leonie Washington (Level 1 licensed bat surveyor) and Carrie Riddleston (unlicensed surveyor) assisted Christian Whiting during the survey.

Results

a) Previous surveys

The previous survey by Eco-Planning with John Dobson as the licensed surveyor found a scatter of BLE droppings on all three floors as well as the loft. A dusk emergence survey (17 October 17) recorded no bats emerging which is not surprising given it was outside the recommended 1st May to 30 September survey window and bat start to leave their summer roosts towards the end of September to move to transitional roosts prior to hibernation.

b) PRA results

The mill is 3 storeys high with a large open loft on the top floor (3rd). It is clad with timber weather boarding and has a plain tile roof; a lean-to on the mill pond (The site inspection recorded several aggregations of mostly brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) dropping on the top floor with further scatters of droppings on first and second floors. The significant number of droppings present were indicative of a small maternity roost. Several open timber joints exist on the walls which could support roosting bats with some small aggregations below some joints of BLE as well as pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus* spp) bats indicating roosting. Given the number of BLE droppings below the ridge on the top floor this would indicate likely roosting in the ridge.

c) Dusk emergence survey results

Weather during the survey was suitable with no rain, light winds and a starting temperature of 18C. Sunset was at 19:47 and the survey commenced at 19:30.

An internal inspection of the mill found BLE bats flying on the first (maximum of 3) and second (maximum of 2) floors with bats illuminated by the torch seen to fly up to the next floor via the stairs. On the third floor a maximum of 9 BLEs were observed flying and periodically at rest. This indicates the presence of a small maternity roost which based on the dropping distribution is likely to be focused on the top floor with bats also periodically roosting on the lower floors and using all the floors for flying, socialising and occasional foraging. Bats were subsequently seen to emerge on the ground floor north side where an opening exists, whilst some bats were also seen to emerge via the lucam where a gap exists in its floor.

A common pipistrelle emerged from the east end of the lean-to low down at 19:45 (Photo 1). A soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) was seen to emerge from the lean-to at the western end (19:45) by the drain pipe (Photo 2) with a second soprano pipistrelle at 19:54. Two common pipistrelle emerged from the base of the lucam at 20:02 (Photo 3). A common pipistrelle emerged from cladding on the east elevation at 20:05, with a pipistrelle entering the east gable end apex at 20:43 (Photo 1). BLE bats were seen to emerge from a window on the ground floor (20:23) and the base of the lucam (20:36) – see Photo 3. It is likely with the reducing light levels the majority of the BLEs exited via the lucam and the opening on the ground floor.



Discussion

The proposed minor groundworks will not impact any roosting bats in the mill such that they can commence without the need for a European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) bat licence.

A second dusk emergence survey will be undertaken in May – June 2022 to provide sufficient information to secure an EPSM bat licence such that a mitigation strategy can be agreed comprising the retention of the loft space for the BLE maternity roost and the creation of some new bat access points (e.g. ridge access and gaps at the eaves in the timber cladding).

Yours sincerely

Christian Whiting BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM

Figures

Photos



45pip @ 20:43

45pip @ 20:05

45pip @ 20:07

Photo 1 East elevation with common pipistrelle bat emergence and re-entry points



55 pips at
19:45, 19:54

Photo 2 West elevation of mill



45pips x2 @ 20:02,
BLE @ 20:36

x3 BLE flying @ 20:15, at
least 1 left @ 20:23 via
the opening in NW corner

Photo 3 The northern elevation of the mill



Photo 4 BLE dropping in loft space