



BUILDING INSPECTION IN RESPECT OF BATS:

**BUILDINGS AT WOODLAND PLACE,
PENGAM ROAD, GILFACH, BARGOED
CAERPHILLY,
CF81 8LD**

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Proposed Development: Buildings at Woodland Place, Pengam Road, Gilfach, Bargoed

Building Inspection in Respect of Bats

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Drawings

Number	Title
-	None available

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

It is proposed to develop an existing building, 5 & 5 Woodland Place in Gilfach near Bargoed in Caerphilly County Borough, in the first instance the demolition of the existing building.

Therefore, a building inspection in respect of bats and birds was undertaken of the site by Celtic Ecology and Conservation Ltd in October 2021. The survey was carried out in accordance with current guidance on standards of survey for bats (Collins (Ed) Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) 2016).

It should be noted that a building inspection in 2013 identified the building as being of a high potential for bats due to the number of potential access points; however, the overall classification given to the building was low – negligible due to the lack of evidence within it. An activity survey of the building in 2016 did not identify any use by bats of the building. Since then, the nature of the building has changed, with the render, uPVC fascias soffits and bargeboards being changed and updated.

This latest inspection identified neither bats nor evidence of bats within the buildings. The building offered no access points for bats. There is a roof space over the main building; the subservient roofs are all over vaulted ceilings.

It is therefore considered that the building is of a negligible value to and for roosting bats.

Further activity surveys, mitigation and a Natural Resources Wales development licence are not considered necessary at this stage.

However, it is recommended that a licensed ecologist be “on call” for the duration of the project in the unlikely event that bats are discovered at any stage of the development.

In the unlikely event that bats be found during the project, all works will cease and a Natural Resources Wales Development Licence will be required before works recommence. Further surveys may be required.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

A building inspection in respect of bats and birds was undertaken in October 2021 by Celtic Ecology and Conservation Ltd of a property, 4 7 5 Woodland Place, in Gilfach near Bargoed, south Wales, to support a planning application to Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC). This survey report therefore details the findings of the building inspection undertaken in October 2021.

This inspection did not identify any evidence of bats on the site and a negligible potential for bats to be present.

It is considered that, due to the building's location, architectural style, construction methodology and materials, there is no requirement for activity surveys prior to any planning determination because of the lack of access for bats and evidence of bats.

The survey was carried out in accordance with current guidance on standards of survey for bats (Bat Conservation Trust, 2016¹) as required by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and CCBC.

1.2 SURVEYOR INFORMATION

The survey was undertaken by Hugh Dixon (NRW license number: S089528-1). Hugh has held an all counties bat survey licence in Wales since 2008 undertaking numerous bats surveys for commercial and voluntary purposes, dealing with a wide range of species and situations. He also holds a level 2 survey licence for all counties in England. Hugh has held CCW / NRW and Natural England development licences for a range of species and designed and implemented mitigation and monitoring.

1.3 SITE DESCRIPTION

The building at Woodland Place is located in Pengam in Gilfach near Bargoed in south Wales (NGR ST15769719; **Figures 1 & 2**). Photos are at **Appendix A**).

The main house (Plates 1 & 2) is a two storey brick and stone built rendered structure at the traffic lights on Pengam Road to the east of Gilfach near Bargoed. There are two extensions to the house (Plates 3 & 4), both of single storeys to the north. All three buildings are roofed with concrete tiles with ridges of the same material oriented north – south.

The soffits and fascias are of uPVC and are in a good condition being are tight to the walls (Plate 5).

Internally, the roof is of an open truss rafter and purlin construction style with a joist to ridge height of approximately 2m (Plate 6). The roof is lined with a reinforced plastic membrane common in the 1980's. This membrane and the roof are in a very good condition. The roof space is unused apart from general and seasonal storage.

¹ *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins, J (Ed). BCT, 2016)

The former Capels Van Centre sales office is located adjacent to the main house (Plates 7 & 8). It is a single storey mono-pitched roofed structure of corrugated aluminium sheet. There are no roof spaces and no potential access points that bats might use.

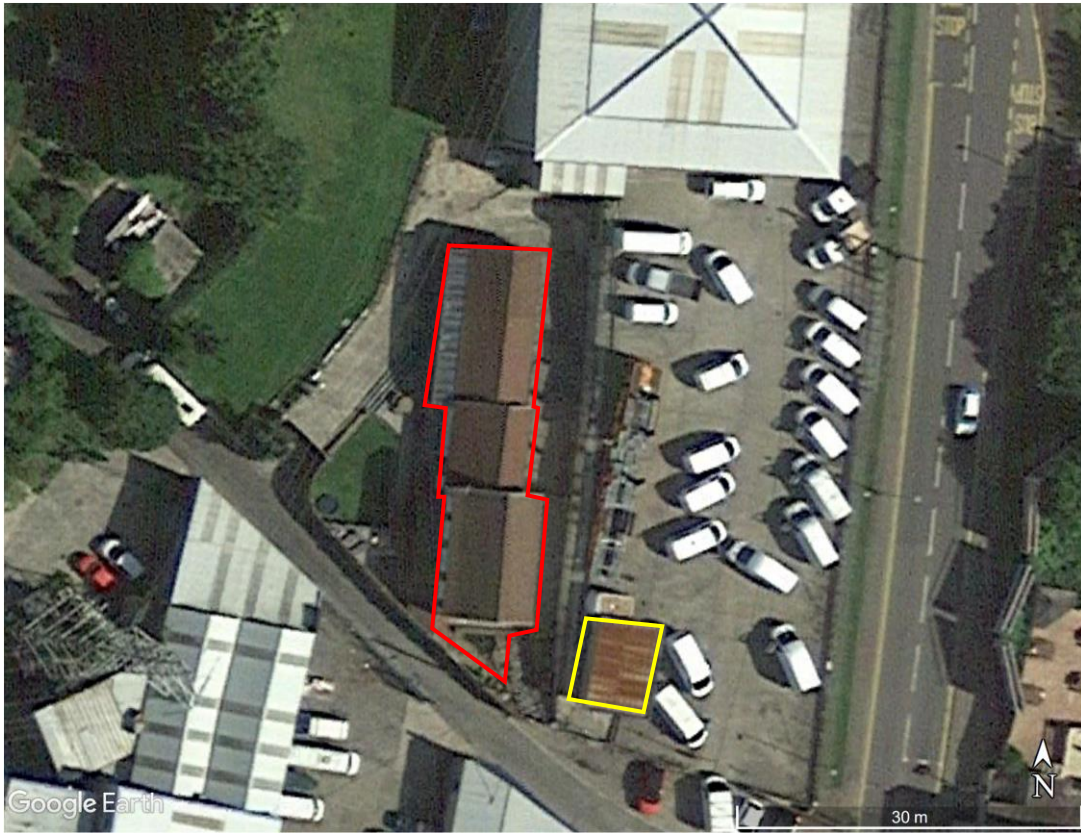
The site is located in a wholly urban area, surrounded by commercial and domestic properties and associated infrastructure. The grounds of the house are tarmac to the east and north and grass to the west.

Figure 1 - general aerial view of the proposed Woodland Place development site (circled yellow)



(Image courtesy of Google Earth)

Figure 2 - detail of the proposed Woodland Place development site (4 & 5 Woodland Place outlined red; former sales office outlined yellow)



(Image courtesy of Google Earth)

2 BAT ECOLOGY

British bats are small flying nocturnal mammals that feed exclusively upon insects. There are 17 species resident in Britain, ranging in size from the small pipistrelle species up to the larger noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*) and greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*). Bats are active from April through to October and hibernate when insects are in short supply in the winter months. Bats emerge from hibernation in late March - early April and move into their transition / intermediary roosts. Female bats will move to maternity sites by the beginning of May and will give birth to a single baby between June and early July. The baby is reared solely by the mother and is weaned and independent by end of August. After breeding, bats move to transition / intermediary roosts and females will visit males at mating roosts. During the autumn, bats feed voraciously to gain weight for the hibernation ahead.

Although traditionally trees, caves and rock faces were used by roosting bats and are still used, many different structures are used nowadays by bats, which take advantage of readymade (man-made) roosts. Structures used frequently include bridges, ice-houses, pill-boxes, disused railway tunnels, houses and barns etc. Bats have home ranges which vary from species to species; from just 3-4km from the roost for the smaller bats while the larger noctule may fly 20km or more. Threats to bats include habitat destruction and the severance of commuting routes, use of agricultural pesticides, intensification of farming methods and deliberate persecution by man. Bats have few natural predators; however the domestic cat is probably the most efficient predator.

3 LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

3.1 CONSERVATION OF HABITATS AND SPECIES REGULATIONS

European Union legislation required that member states designate sites for the protection of habitats and species included in the annexes of both Council Directive 92/43/EC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna (the Habitats Directive) and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (the Birds Directive). This legislation is implemented in the UK by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) ("the Habitat Regulations").

The Habitat Regulations (2017) provided safeguards for European Protected Species (those listed under Annex IV Habitats Directive). With regards to bats, this made it an offence to:

- Deliberately (or recklessly in Scotland) capture, injure or kill a bat
- Deliberately (or recklessly in Scotland) disturb a bat in a way that would (significantly in Scotland) affect its ability to survive, breed or rear young (or hibernate or migrate in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or (significantly in England, Wales and Scotland) affect the local distribution or abundance of the species.
- Damage or destroy a roost (this is an 'absolute' offence)
- Possess, control, transport, sell, exchange or offer for sale/exchange any live or dead bat or any part of a bat

It should be noted that although from 31st January 2021 the UK is no longer a member state, protection enacted under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) will continue to apply in UK law through the Conservation of Habitat and Species

(amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and the European Withdrawal Act 2018 following the implementation of Brexit until notified otherwise.

Working in protected sites or disturbing protected species is possible as long as consent has been issued by Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

It is possible to undertake damaging activities under the auspices of a Protected Species Licence issued by NRW which provides a derogation from the Regulations, meaning that an otherwise illegal operation carried out under licence is lawful.

3.2 WILDLIFE & COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is the legislation for England and Wales for nature conservation, making it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in or at a roost;
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a roost;
- Intentionally destroy, damage or otherwise disturb a roost (whether bats are present or not); and
- Intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take (capture) a bat.

3.3 THE ENVIRONMENT (WALES) ACT, 2016

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 sets out the requirement for the 'sustainable management of natural resources' together with new ways of working to achieve this. Part 1 of the Environment Act sets out Wales' approach to planning and managing natural resources at a national and local level with a general purpose linked to statutory 'principles of sustainable management of natural resources' defined within the Act.

Section 6 – Biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty

Section 6 under Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduced an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (the S6 duty) for public authorities in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales.

The S6 duty requires that public authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems.

Section 7 - Biodiversity lists and duty to take steps to maintain and enhance biodiversity

This section replaces the duty in section 42 of the NERC Act 2006. The Welsh Ministers will publish, review and revise lists of living organisms and types of habitat in Wales, which they consider are of key significance to sustain and improve biodiversity in relation to Wales.

The Welsh Ministers must also take all reasonable steps to maintain and enhance the living organisms and types of habitat included in any list published under this section, and encourage others to take such steps.

Part 1 of the Act, including Sections 6 and 7, came into force on May 21, 2016.

Other elements of NERC 2006 may still apply.

3.4 THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL COMMUNITIES ACT, 2006

Section 40 of the NERC Act places a duty to conserve biodiversity on public authorities in England (and, for parts of the legislation, Wales). It requires local authorities and government departments to have regard to the purposes of conserving biodiversity in a manner that is consistent with the exercise of their normal functions such as policy and decision-making. 'Conserving biodiversity' may include enhancing, restoring or protecting a population or a habitat.

Section 41 requires the Secretary of State to publish and maintain lists of species and types of habitats which are regarded by Natural England to be of "principal importance" for the purposes of conserving biodiversity in England. These 56 priority habitats and 943 species are drawn from earlier lists of United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species and Habitats. The Section 41 lists are needed by decision-makers in local and regional authorities when carrying out their duties under Section 40 of the Act.

A public authority can be a:

- local authority including a unitary, county, district, community, parish or town council
- government department or one of their executive agencies
- non-departmental government body
- NHS Trust
- utility company
- body carrying out functions of a public character under a statutory power

3.5 THE WELL BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT, 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations Act became law in April 2015 and is concerned with improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

It will make the public bodies in Wales listed in the Act think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

To help public bodies achieve the same vision, the Act puts in place seven well-being goals. Linked to the goals a set of National Indicators are currently under development to help measure whether we are achieving the goals including the Resilient Wales goal.

Resilient Wales' goal

'A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).'

The Well-being of Future Generations Act recognises the importance of nature and its biodiversity. The resilient Wales' goal will help with nature recovery objectives in Wales.

The Act establishes a statutory Future Generations Commissioner for Wales to support the public bodies listed in the Act to work towards achieving the well-being goals.

The Act also establishes Public Services Boards (PSBs) for each local authority area in Wales. PSBs are tasked with improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of its area by working to achieve the well-being goals.

4 METHODOLOGY

The inspection consisted of two parts:

- Biological records data search;
- Visual inspection;

The assessment was undertaken in accordance with the latest guidance on bat surveys and current best practice and with the agreement of CCBC.

4.1 DESK STUDY

A desk study was undertaken as part of the Building Inspection involving gathering data from the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC). The search included all submitted records on about all species of bats from within a buffer of 2km. Details of all sites within 10km notified for the presence of horseshoe bat species was also requested.

Previous surveys of the site were consulted where known and available.

4.2 EXTERNAL & INTERNAL DAYTIME ASSESSMENT

4.2.1 External assessment

The building was subject of an external inspection by a bat licensed ecologist on 22nd October 2021 to assess the potential of the building to support bats. The assessment also aimed to identify any features that may be used by bats. The assessment was subjective and based primarily upon the building's structure, current use, location and the presence (or otherwise) of suitable roosting locations within it. The assessment involved a brief scan of the building's exterior from close range. The inspections included:

- checking the exterior of the structure for locations that appeared potentially suitable for use by bats as roosts or as access points to roosts further inside the building; and
- closer inspection of such locations for bats and signs of use by bats.

4.2.2 Internal Assessment

Following the external inspection, an internal daytime assessment was undertaken using a torch and where appropriate, an endoscope, ladder and binoculars to search all safely accessible internal voids (including roof spaces, cellars etc.) deemed to be potentially suitable for use by bats as roosts.

Internal inspections continue the assessment carried out previously of the external fabric of the buildings and also to look for direct evidence of bats within the buildings. Evidence may survive inside buildings, whereas weather will quickly deteriorate any evidence on the outside surfaces of buildings. Evidence of roosting bats includes:

- Live or dead bats;
- Bat droppings;

- Fur oil/urine staining;
- Characteristic scratches; and
- Noise made by bats.

4.3 BAT SURVEY

No activity surveys were carried out at this time.

4.4 CONSTRAINTS

There may be species records either not submitted to the local biological records centre or currently waiting to be digitised. Therefore, where undertaken, a negative return on a records search does not permit the assumption that bats are not present.

There were no other constraints to the survey.

5 RESULTS

5.1 DESK STUDY

There are no sites within 10km of the property which are designated for bats, or include them within their citations.

A desk study identified 116 records of 7 bat species and 4 broad non-species specific classifications within 2kms of the property. The closest records were of single soprano pipistrelle, common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats roosting in the building ext door to Ty Gwalia. There is no information available on where the roost or its access points are located. The next record is from over 400m away.

The following species were present in the data search results:

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Chiroptera</i>	Bats
<i>Myotis mystacinus</i>	Whiskered Bat
<i>Myotis nattereri</i>	Natterer's Bat
<i>Myotis</i>	Unidentified Bat
<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	Noctule Bat
<i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>	Nathusius's Pipistrelle
<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Common Pipistrelle
<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Pipistrelle
<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	Soprano Pipistrelle
<i>Pipistrellus</i>	Pipistrelle
<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	Brown Long-eared Bat

The species records include summer (non-breeding), maternity and day roosting records. Non-roosting records are of bats either foraging or commuting.

The area surrounding the development site is considered to be one that is used by a limited range of bat species which are perhaps more easily habituated to urban locations for roosting and foraging purposes. Horseshoe, long-eared and *Myotis* species bats preferentially avoid light and are therefore less likely to be present in proximity to the Kingsway, reducing the diversity of species likely to be found in proximity to the site.

5.2 EXTERNAL DAYTIME ASSESSMENT

Neither bats nor evidence of bats was observed externally.

No potential access points were identified:

5.3 INTERNAL DAYTIME ASSESSMENT

There were no internal spaces accessible to bats.

Neither bats nor evidence of bats was observed internally.

6 EVALUATION OF ECOLOGICAL FEATURES

It is considered that there will be no use by bats of 4 & 5 Woodland Place because there are no potential access points and no accessible roosting spaces. The former ales office does not provide bats with any suitable roosting habitat.

As a result, it is considered that both 4 & 5 Woodland Place, Gilfach, Bargoed and the former sales office are both (still) of a **negligible** ecological importance to and for bats.

CONFIDENCE LEVEL: HIGH

6.1 WINTER USE

It is considered that bats will not use the building for hibernation purposes.

CONFIDENCE LEVEL: HIGH

6.2 BAT ROOST LOCATIONS

None.

6.3 INCIDENTAL RECORDS

None.

7 IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENT

7.1 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

It is proposed to demolish both the house and former sales office and replace them with a range of small commercial units.

7.2 PREDICTED IMPACTS WITHOUT MITIGATION

There are unlikely to be any adverse impacts on roosting bats due to the lack of roosting sites.

7.3 MITIGATING THE IMPACTS

Mitigation will not be required.

7.4 ENHANCEMENTS

Consideration will be given to including enhancements within the project to provide bat roosting habitat.

8 MITIGATION / ENHANCEMENT

8.1 MITIGATION

Mitigation is not required at this time unless bats are observed within either of the buildings during the course of the development.

8.2 ENHANCEMENTS (BATS)

Consideration will be given to

EITHER

placing a wall mounted bat box, e.g. Schwegler 1WQ (or similar), on the south or south west facing elevations of any replacement / new building (or other suitable location to be determined by a suitably experienced ecologist);

OR

erecting an "American" style pole mounted bat box (design at **Appendix B**) (or similar).

Whichever option is chosen, the final location will be determined in consultation with the developer on completion of a final design.

9 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 LICENSING

There is no requirement for a Natural Resources Wales development license at this time.

However, if bats are discovered using the building at any time during the project, then all work will cease immediately and not resume until such time as a licence has been sought and obtained from NRW. In this event, mitigation and a method statement will be required.

9.2 SUPERVISION

As the buildings are of a negligible potential to and for bats, ecological supervision of the removal of the roof will not be required.

9.3 TIMESCALES

There are no constraints on timescales.

9.4 LIGHTING

There will be no direct external lighting of the bat enhancement feature.

There are no other constraints on lighting.

9.5 MATERIALS

Bats will not have access into the new building; therefore, there will be no constraints on materials.

10 CONCLUSION

It is proposed to demolish two buildings, 4 & 5 Woodland Place and the former Capels Van Centre sales office on Pengam Road in Gilfach near Bargoed, south Wales. It is anticipated that the buildings will be replaced with new commercial units.

All bats are **internationally** important as they are protected by European law. Therefore, any roost where they are found is of **high** ecological importance.

Due to there being no potential bat access opportunities on either the house or sales office, it is considered that both buildings are of a **negligible** potential ecological value to and for bats.

It is recommended that an ecologist be "on call" for the duration of the project and consulted immediately in the unlikely event that bats are discovered at any later stage of the development.

Further activity surveys, mitigation and a Natural Resources Wales development licence are not considered necessary unless bats are observed during the course of the project. Should bats be found, all works will cease immediately and a Natural Resources Wales Development Licence will be sought and obtained before works recommence.

11 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A – PHOTOGRAPHS

Plate 1 – 4 & 5 Woodland Place front (western) elevation



Plate 2 – 4 & 5 Woodland Place side and rear (southern and eastern) elevation



Plate 3—Central extension



Plate 4a – Northerly extension



Plate 4b – Northerly extension gable end



Plate 5a – uPVC fascia / soffit detail



Plate 5b – uPVC fascia / soffit detail

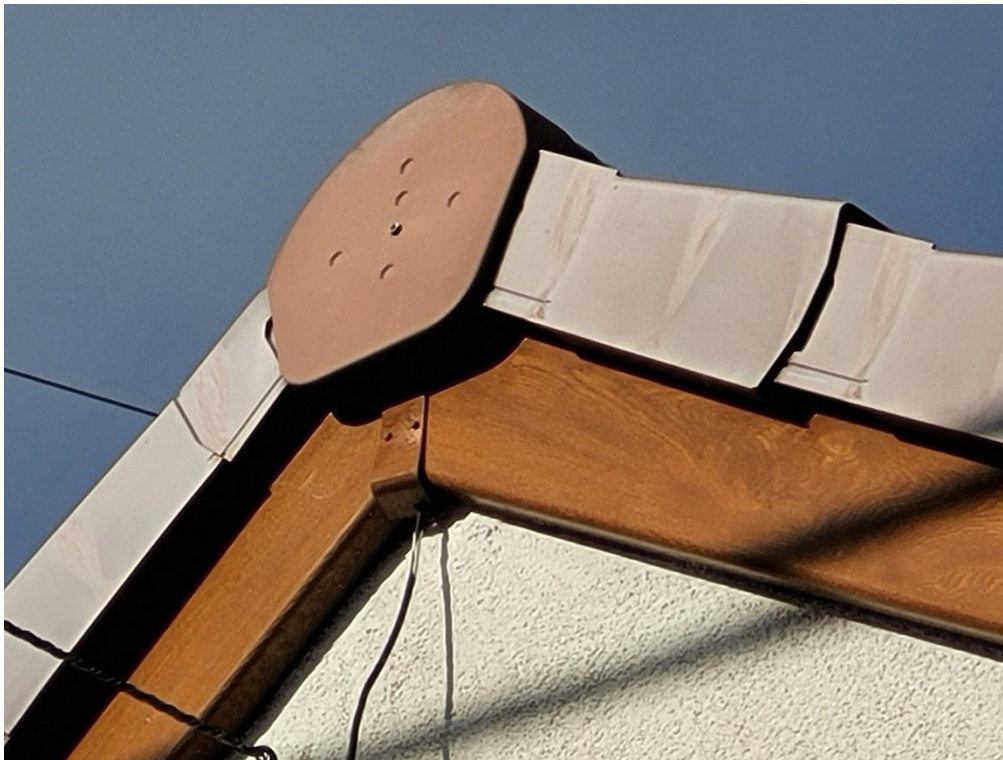


Plate 6 – Roof space interior



Plate 7 – former sales office - southern and western elevations

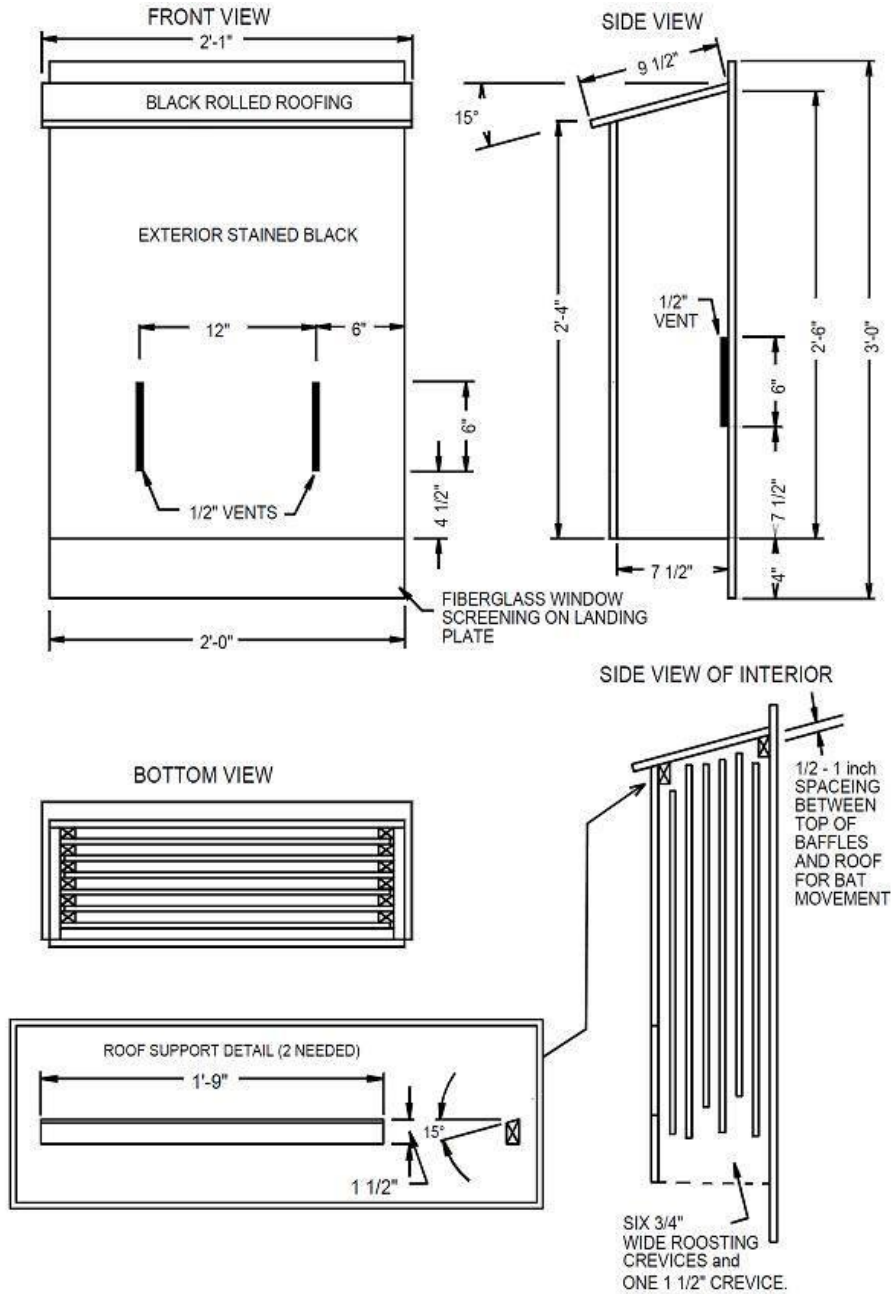


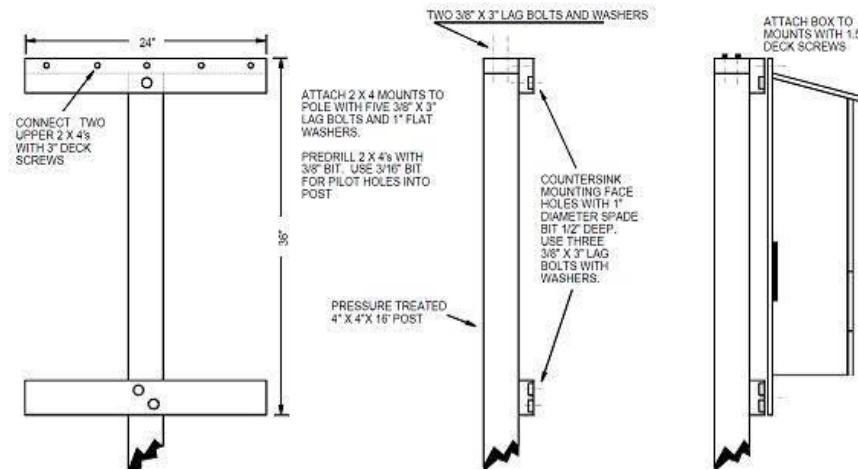
Plate 8 – former sales office - western elevation



APPENDIX B – AMERICAN STYLE BAT BOX DESIGN

Detail of American style bat box enhancement to be mounted with the base of the box at least 3.5m above ground level (e.g. on a telegraph pole or similar)





It should be noted that "off the shelf" versions of this design are available:

<https://www.nhbs.com/pole-mounted-maternity-bat-box>

<https://www.wildcare.co.uk/pole-mounted-roost-maternity-single-double-bat-box.html>