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ECOLOGICAL CONSULTANTS

AWARDS CIEEM 2019 Medium Consultancy of the Year

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Andrew Foster
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Dear Andrew,

Bat Emergence Survey– Buttercross Building, Witney Campus, Oxfordshire

I am writing to provide you with the results of the recent bat emergence survey undertaken to inform the renovation works proposed on the Buttercross building at the Witney Campus. The survey undertaken was broadly precautionary to rule out the use of sub optimal features by roosting bats which could not be inspected during the initial building inspection which can be read in the original ecological assessment[1]. This brief letter report provides a summary of the survey methodology, survey limitations and provides the results of the survey. The report also provides appropriate further recommendations to undertake the work in relation to roosting bats and nesting birds.

Survey Methodology

The bat emergence survey was undertaken on the 27th of May 2021 during suitable weather conditions. The temperature was between 17˚C-14˚C, wind 2/12, cloud 3/8. The survey commenced 15 minutes prior to sunset at 20:54 and continued for 2 hours after sunset until-23:09. The surveyors were equipped with full spectrum bat detectors (Batbox duet) and recording devices (Iriver or Zoom Handy HD2). The surveyors were positioned around the building to cover the features which have the potential to be used by roosting bats. To adequately cover the roof structure two surveyors were positioned on the northern elevation whilst also covering the east and western elevations. A third surveyor watched the southern roof structure and elevation of the main building.

The ecologists carrying out the surveys were Henry Sturgess BSc MCIEEM, Joel Wright BSc MSc MCIEEM and Fabian Bowes-Richley BSc MSc. Henry, Joel and Fabian all have the requisite experience and have passed the Clarkson & Woods QS process being considered competent to undertake the survey.

Survey Limitations

Due to a large wall and several trees to the immediate south of the structure the third surveyor could not get complete visual coverage of the entire southern roof pitch. A small section of the roof and eaves on the eastern portion of the southern roof pitch was only partially visible. Despite this, the lack of full visual coverage is not considered a significant limitation due to the low quality bat roosting features on this side of the roof and the low rate of bat detection throughout the survey. There was no bat activity recorded during the survey that suggested there was obscured roost at this location.

Survey Results

The survey recorded no bats emerging from or re-entering the structure or any of the adjacent buildings. Overall bat activity to the north of the building was very low due to artificial lighting and reasonably low quality foraging habitat within an urbanised environment. To the south in the adjacent playground (associated with Bats Primary School) foraging by common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* bats was intermittent with occasional bats foraging around the trees to the south of the building from 22 minutes after sunset. A noctule *Nyctalus noctula* was also briefly heard suggesting the conditions were conducive to bat activity.

[1] Clarkson and Woods Ltd – Buttercross Building- Witney Campus- Ecological Assessment 1.0

None of the bats recorded during the survey were seen emerging from the structure and were observed to commute to the playground surrounding the southern elevation of the building from adjacent habitats. The early start of common pipistrelle foraging in close proximity to the building suggests that there are some pipistrelle roosts in the local area.

Recommendations and Enhancements

Due to the lack of bat roosts recorded it is considered safe to undertake the proposed works without the need for further surveys, mitigation or licencing, as they present negligible potential to disturb roosting bats. There is very low potential for a small roost to have been missed due to lack of use during the survey. As such, if any bats or signs of roosting bats are encountered during the renovation works, works to that area must stop immediately and Clarkson and Woods Ltd contacted for advice. If bats are found to be roosting within the roof or structure of the building, which will be impacted by the works, a licence will need to be applied for from Natural England to ensure the works are undertaken legally.

It is recommended that the addition of external lighting is avoided wherever possible, or controlled using lights triggered by sensors and on short duration timers.

As noted in the initial ecological assessment, the building has the potential to support nesting birds due to the covering of ivy and gaps at the eaves and it is recommended that, if the works are due to be undertaken during the nesting season (March to August inclusive), a nesting bird check should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 48 hours prior to renovation works taking place. This is in order to rule out the presence of nesting species. If any nesting birds are found to be present, works in that area will need to be delayed until young have fledged.

During the emergence survey the surveyors also recorded a Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* foraging in the grassland surrounding the building. Due to this we would recommend that consideration is given to providing hedgehog access through any new fences or gates included in the landscaping, this can be provided by allowing a 13cm square hole in the base of any new boundary fences.

Opportunities to provide ecological enhancements as part of the renovation proposals are encouraged. This could include the provision of two bird nesting boxes hung on retained trees or walls within the development area. These should ideally be Schwegler or woodcrete design (for proven success and longevity). The boxes should aim to attract species such as coal tit *Periparus ater*, wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* and blackbird *Turdus merula*. These will need to be provided at heights which match these species nesting requirements Two further features for nesting birds should also be considered for inclusion within the structure of the building or affixed to the northern or eastern elevations at the eaves. These should target species including house sparrow *Passer domesticus* and house martin *Delichon urbicum*.

The use of a traditional 1F bitumen roofing felt to line the new slate roof would constitute a significant enhancement for roosting bats making the new roof liner proposed safe for bats to roost within (breathable roof membranes are unsuitable for use with roosting bats). Alternatively two bat boxes could be installed on the southern elevation of the structure to provide additional roosting features for bats. Bat boxes should be hung at 3.5-4m from ground level.

Conclusion

The proposed works can progress without the need for further bat surveys or any direct ecological supervision. In the unlikely event roosting bats are discovered during the proposed renovation works, Clarkson & Woods should be contacted immediately and a licence applied for from Natural England. A nesting bird check is recommended no more than 48 hours prior to the start of works if these take place during the nesting bird season (March to August inclusive). A range of ecological enhancements have been suggested in relation to roosting bats and nesting birds which would significantly increase the wildlife potential of the building and surrounding habitats.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Henry Sturgess BSc MCIEEM
Senior Ecologist