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Ecology Report

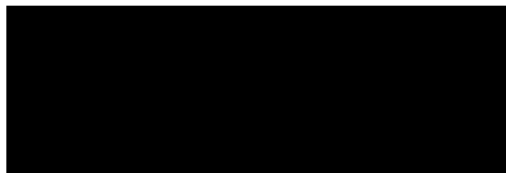


Mount Pleasant

Disclosure

The information, opinion, and advice which I have prepared and provided is true and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the CIEEM's Code of Professional Conduct and the British Standard for Biodiversity –Code of Practice for Planning and Development (2013). I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional bona fide opinions.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

SWE Limited was commissioned to undertake a protected species survey of Mount Pleasant, Sandford, Crediton, EX17 4LT (Ordnance Survey grid reference SS 826025). The survey was required to support a planning application for internal alterations and remodelling of an existing extension to the house. The location of the extension is shown in Figure 1. Note: the proposed works do not impact on the adjoining thatched roof.

Figure 1. The location of the property.



1.2 Report Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

- provide an ecological assessment through consideration of a Preliminary Roost Appraisal (PRA);
- identify the ecological constraints in relation to the proposed development;
- identify, where required, the need for additional protected species surveys;

- identify the mitigation measures which may be required to ensure compliance with nature conservation; and
- identify preliminary enhancement and compensation measures which could be incorporated into the conversion design, in line with local and national planning policy.

This report has been written in accordance with the guidance produced by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) 2017¹.

1.3 Report Lifespan

In accordance with CIEEM guidance² this report, and the results of the ecological survey contained within, remains valid for 12 months.

1.4 Author

The author of this report, Dr S. Holloway, has over twenty-five years' professional experience of ecology, environmental management, and nature conservation in the private, public, and voluntary sectors. He has worked extensively throughout the UK on projects relating to bats, including wind farms, quarries, and residential/industrial development. Dr Holloway is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and is a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv).

All work was undertaken in accordance with the CIEEM recommendations, the most up-to-date and relevant survey guidance available at the time (Bat Conservation Trust 2016), and in compliance with BS:42020:2013 Biodiversity. Code of Practice for Planning and Development.

¹ CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

² CIEEM. 2019. On the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys. Advice Note. April 2019.

2.0 RELEVANT LEGISLATION³

2.1 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the Habitats Regulations) transpose Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna (Habitats Directive) into English law, making it an offence to deliberately capture, kill or disturb⁴ wild animals listed under Schedule 2 of the Regulations. It is also an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal (even if the animal is not present at the time). Species include all bats and hazel dormice.

The Habitats Regulations 2017 will continue to implement the Habitats Directive and certain elements of the Birds Directives in England. The Habitats Regulations 2010 have been amended ten times since they were last consolidated (in 2010) and are likely to remain in place for some time now that the UK has exited the EU.

2.2 Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, consolidates and amends existing national legislation to implement the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (Birds Directive), making it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take *any* wild bird or their eggs or nests (with certain exceptions) and disturb any bird species listed under Schedule 1 to the Act, or its dependent young while it is nesting;
- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild animal listed under Schedule 5 to the Act e.g. all bat and reptile species;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct any place used for shelter or protection by any wild animal listed under Schedule 5 to the Act; or

³ Please note that the summary of relevant legislation provided here is intended for general guidance only. The original legislation should be consulted for definitive information.

⁴ Disturbance, as defined by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, includes in particular any action which impairs the ability of animals to survive, breed, rear their young, hibernate or migrate (where relevant); or which affects significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species.

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb certain Schedule 5 animal species while they occupy a place used for shelter or protection.

2.3 Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

The NERC Act 2006 places a duty on authorities to have due regard for biodiversity and nature conservation during the course of their operations.

Section 41 of the Act requires the publication of a list of species which are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The Section 41 list is used to guide authorities in implementing their duty to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity. The following bat species are listed in Section 41: soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus*, lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, greater horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus* and Bechstein's *Myotis bechsteinii*.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

A PRA of the extension was undertaken on the 12th May 2022 in line with Bat Conservation Trust (BCT, 2016)⁵ guidance. The PRA involved a detailed external and internal inspection of the extension to compile information on potential and actual bat entry/exit points; potential and actual bat roost locations; and evidence of bats such as droppings. A search for historic evidence of nesting birds was conducted during the PRA.

The weather at the time of the survey was overcast, F0 winds and 17°C.

The exterior of the extension was visually assessed for potential bat access points and evidence of bat activity, using binoculars where necessary. Features, such as small gaps/ crevices beneath eaves, along the ridges; or gaps around doorways which had potential as bat access points into the building were sought. Evidence that these potential access points were actively used by bats typically would include staining within gaps and/ or bat droppings or urine staining under gaps and/ or on walls. These signs were recorded wherever they were present. The presence of cobwebs and general detritus within the features were also recorded as these indicate that potential access points were likely to be inactive.

There was no internal roof space.

3.1 Limitations

This report is based on the evidence recorded at the site at the time of the survey.

The ecological appraisal did not include a search for Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) or Conservation Area status.



Bats and birds are highly mobile species groups and therefore the findings and assessments provided should be regarded as a 'snapshot' of activity during part of the season.

⁵ Collins 2016. Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists. Good Practice Guidance. 3rd Edition.

4.0 RESULTS

Mount Pleasant is a semi - detached cottage located in the village of Sandford. The cottage is constructed from cob with a random rubble stone plinth and is thatched. There is a single storey side extension to the north elevation constructed around the mid-20th Century.

The immediate landscape consists of residential properties and gardens. The wider landscape is agricultural, consisting primarily of grassland fields bounded by hedgerows with trees. The landscape was of moderate to high commuting and foraging value for bats. The details of the building survey are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Building description and protected species evidence	
Building photos	Features and evidence of protected species
	<p>The extension consisted of a block built rendered structure with a single skinned flat roof. The roofing felt was pinned to timber barge boards. There was a slight gap under the boards, however the gap was very narrow and filled with detritus and cobwebbing. The feature was considered unsuitable for roosting bats.</p>
	<p>There were timber framed doors and windows – these contained no suitable ingress points for bats or birds.</p> <p>No evidence of nesting birds or roosting bats was found. The extension was considered unsuitable for either taxon.</p> <p>The extension do not connect to the main house roof.</p>

5.0 ASSESSMENT

The results of the survey were assessed in accordance with current legislation and policy.

The evidence gathered during the PRA survey concluded that the extension had negligible suitability for roosting bats. In accordance with best practice no further assessment of the extension, or mitigation or compensation measures, for bats is required.

No evidence of nesting birds was found. No mitigation or compensation for nesting birds is required.

In accordance with local and national planning policy a degree of biodiversity enhancement should be included within all planning applications. In this instance the height of the extension means that it is unsuitable for including bat or bird boxes. It is therefore advised that a single bat box is attached to the northern aspect of the main house to the western edge. The box should be placed as high as possible towards the eaves with the entrance located away from artificial light sources. A suitable box would be the Beaumaris Woodstone Bat Box (available from NHBS) or equivalent.

6.0 CLOSURE

This report has been prepared by SWE Limited with all reasonable skill, care, and diligence, and taking account of the manpower and resources devoted to it by agreement with the client. Information reported herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.

The information presented in this report provides guidance to reduce the risk of offences under UK law. However, SWE is not a legal practice and disclaims any responsibility to the client and others for actions that lead to offences being caused, whether or not the guidance contained in this report is followed. Interpretation of UK legislation is presented in good faith; however, for the avoidance of doubt, we recommend that specialist legal advice is sought.

This report is for the exclusive use of R. and E. Owen; no warranties or guarantees are expressed or should be inferred by any third parties. This report may not be relied upon by other parties without written consent from SWE.

SWE disclaims any responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the agreed scope of the work.

