

OLD SCHOOL HOUSE  
PLUNDER STREET  
CLEEVE  
BRISTOL  
BS49 4PQ

# ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

27 JUNE 2022

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## QUALITY ASSURANCE

This survey work and report has been undertaken with reference to; The publication 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists' Collins, J. (ed) 2016, 3rd edition, Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Description	Ecological Assessment
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Author	M Pearmain
Checked & reviewed by	C Carter BSc (Hons) MCIEEM Principal Ecologist
Report validity period	12 months from survey date

### DISCLAIMER

This report provides a broad overview of the legal protection of wildlife and specifically relates to how the law is applied in England. The law applied to other countries of the United Kingdom may differ. This report does not offer formal legal advice and no liability is accepted. If legal advice is required related to wildlife issues, this should be sought from appropriate professionals.

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## BRIEF SUMMARY

Brookside Ecology was commissioned to undertake an Ecological Assessment of the Old School House, Plunder Street, Cleeve, Somerset. The assessment was undertaken to inform proposals for the replacement of a conservatory in relation to the potential presence of protected species in accordance with local and national planning policy and legislative requirements.

The desk study revealed the site is within an 'impact risk zone' of statutory sites designated for their scientific or conservation value. This proposal does not appear to fall into one of the identified risk categories that might require the local planning authority to consult Natural England on the likely risks to designated sites. The site is within 'Band A' of the North Somerset Bat consultation Zone.

The assessment found the wider area to have a variety of habitats suitable for many species of wildlife and was assessed as having 'high suitability for bat commuting and foraging habitat.'

The conservatory and area of immediate impact is assessed as having 'negligible suitability for roosting bats.' No impacts on other protected or notable species and habitats are anticipated by proposals.

## INTRODUCTION

1. Brookside Ecology was commissioned to undertake an Ecological Assessment of the Old School House at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference (OSGR) ST 4586 6541. The assessment was undertaken to inform proposals in relation to the potential presence of protected species for legislative requirements

## PROPOSALS

2. It is proposed an existing conservatory is demolished and replaced with new.

## OBJECTIVES

3. The purpose of this preliminary assessment is to:
  - Identify any ecological, bat or other protected or notable species issues that may impact the proposals.
  - Make preliminary recommendations for mitigation and enhancement opportunities where required.
  - Specify further survey work if required in accordance with best practice guidance.

## METHODS

4. The preliminary assessment of the building was undertaken 27 June 2022 by C Carter and M Pearmain, Natural England registered bat workers.
5. A visual inspection of the interior and exterior of a building is undertaken for evidence of bat use following standard survey methodologies. The publication 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists'<sup>1</sup> is used for reference and guidance.
6. Several factors are taken into consideration during an assessment. These include; features present within or on the site that would support roosting bats; the potential for disturbance; lighting impacts; proximity of features to foraging habitat; connectivity to the site between it and the wider countryside.
7. A thorough examination of the exterior of a building is undertaken to search for evidence of bat use with a visual inspection of structures such as window and door lintels, gaps in walls, lead flashing, fascia boards, ridge, roof and hanging tiles where present. Underneath these features a search for evidence of droppings, staining from urine and fur oil that might indicate use by bats.
8. The internal search of a building follows a similar approach with a thorough search made of crevices in timber joints, wall sockets and gaps in walls where present. Evidence of bat droppings, urine stains plus prey residues such as fly, butterfly or moth wings and any live bats or bat carcasses that might be present.
9. Equipment available for use include close-focussing binoculars - Vistron 10 x 40, Endoscope - Scopecam, 3.8 metre extendable ladders and Clulite high powered torches.
10. The bat roosting potential of a building is assessed along with the surrounding habitat/commuting features and classified into one of the following categories below:

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<sup>1</sup> Collins, J. (ed) 2016, Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines. 3rd edition, Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Suitability	Description of Roost Level
Negligible	Negligible feature/s likely to be used by roosting bats
Low	Structures with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation).
Moderate	Structures with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
High	Structures with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger number of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.
Roost	Known or Confirmed Roost

Table 1. Bat roosting potential of buildings/structures, adapted from Collins 2016 (Description of commuting/habitat aspects removed for simplicity)

## OTHER NOTABLE SPECIES AND ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

11. Full consideration is given to how the development might impact other species and habitats on, and immediately surrounding the development.
12. In a development such as this the most likely wildlife that might be encountered would be nesting birds and hence a search is made for nests and faecal deposits.

## DESK STUDY

13. The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website was consulted to identify sites designated for their conservation or biological interest. The Natural England website was used to obtain citation details of statutory sites. A search was also undertaken for European Protected Species Licences for bats within the same radius which provides an indication of how developments are impacting on species and roosts in the area.

14. A 1 km search on NBN Atlas was undertaken to search for records of bats to ascertain their prevalence in the wider area.
15. Google satellite view was used to identify habitats of value to protected and notable species including woodland, tree lines and hedgerows, scrub, areas of grassland and waterbodies.



## RESULTS

### WEATHER

16. Dry, 10% Cloud Cover, Temp 18°C, Wind speed Beaufort 1

### SITE CONTEXT



Figure 1. Red marker indicates site location



Plate 1. Google Satellite view, red outline indicates building

17. The site is located to the south-eastern edge of the village of Cleve in Somerset. It is surrounded by established light residential development, hedge bordered fields of grassland and close to large areas of woodland. There would be low levels of light pollution in the area, mainly light spill from nearby dwellings.

## BUILDING



Plate 2. North-western elevation of conservatory for demolition

18. The site of proposals (Plate 2) is a timber and glass conservatory under a polycarbonate sheet roof.
19. The structure is well sealed with no gaps or crevices that wildlife could access inside. The attached wall is well pointed with no gaps or crevices around the area of attachment. No evidence of bats or other notable species was found.
20. The immediate surrounds of the conservatory are hard landscaping of concrete and stone patio and steps with a small ornamental Conifer tree.



Plate 3. South-western elevation

## DESK STUDY

21. The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website was consulted and revealed the site is within 'impact risk zone' of statutory sites. However, this proposal does not appear to require the planning authority to consult Natural England on potential risks to such sites.
22. The search within a 1 kilometre radius of the site revealed:
  - Kings wood and Urchin Wood & Goblin Combe - Sites of Special Scientific Interest
  - North Somerset & Mendip Bats - Special Area of Conservation
23. The search for records of European Protected Species Licences granted for bats in the search radius revealed no results.
24. A search on NBN Atlas revealed records of Serotine, Leisler, Noctule, Brown Long-eared, Lesser and Greater Horseshoe and Nathusius, Common and Soprano Pipistrelle bats within the search radius.
25. The site is within 'Band A' of the North Somerset Bat consultation Zone.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

26. The desk study revealed the site is within an 'impact risk zone' of statutory sites designated for their scientific or conservation value. Impact risk zones are used in the assessment of planning applications for likely impacts on SSSIs, SACs, Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites. This proposal does not appear to fall into one of the identified risk categories that might require the local planning authority to consult Natural England on the likely risks to designated sites. The site is within 'Band A' of the North Somerset Bat consultation Zone.
27. The assessment found the wider area to have a variety of habitats suitable for many species of wildlife. There are adjacent tree lines and hedges that would provide suitable commuting features that some bat species might use to move between site and wider countryside. There would be low levels of light pollution in the area. The area is assessed as having 'high suitability for bat commuting and foraging habitat' and would increase the probability of bat roosts being in the locality.
28. The conservatory and area of immediate impact are assessed as having 'negligible suitability for roosting bats.' The conservatory has no potential roost features and the replacement building is proposed to be located within the same footprint of that existing and therefore there will be no additional impact on the wider house or garden. Accordingly, no impacts on protected or notable species and habitats are anticipated by proposals.

## LIMITATIONS

29. None.

## FURTHER SURVEY

30. None.

## LEGISLATION AD PLANNING POLICY

31. A brief outline of relevant wildlife legislation is detailed below with a focus on that relevant to the site in question. It is not meant to be an in depth treatise of all wildlife regulations as this is not possible within the scope of this report. It is advised that individuals should seek professional legal advice if necessary.

### BATS

32. All British bats are protected under both UK and EU law; The Habitats Directive, which is transposed into law in England and Wales by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('Habitats Regulations'), as amended.

33. Regulation 41 (1) of the Regulations makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill bat(s);
- Deliberately disturb bat(s) affecting their ability to survive, breed, rear young or significantly affect local distribution or abundance;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place, whether present or not;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat roost;
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to roost sites;
- Possess, control, transport, sell, exchange or offer for sale or exchange, live or dead bats, or parts thereof.

34. Some rare bat species, namely Greater Horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, Lesser Horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, Barbastelle *Barbastellus barbastellus* and Bechstein's *Myotis bechsteinii*, are afforded greater protection under European legislation, being listed under Annex II of the EC Habitats Directive which lists species whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

## BIRDS

35. All wild birds are protected under the Habitats Regulations. Under this legislation it is an offence to:

- Kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built;  
and
- Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

## NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

36. The relevant adopted policy at the national level is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as amended July 2021, which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. This emphasises the need for planning authorities to consider biological conservation and the need for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity within planning policies and decisions.