

Bat and Bird Scoping Survey of Wren Cottage, Wrington Lane, Congresbury, Somerset, BS49 5BQ

Client Mr J Murphey

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Non-technical Summary

Background

In August 2022, Crossman Associates was commissioned by Mr J Murphy to undertake a bat and bird survey of Wren Cottage, Wrington Lane, Congresbury, Somerset, BS49 5BQ.

Proposals are to demolish the garage and utility room and extend the dwelling on the southern elevation.

Methodology

The scoping survey was undertaken by Fairbrass Knowles, a fully licensed bat worker, experienced ecologist and full member of CIEEM. The dwelling was inspected both externally and internally for any evidence of bat / bird presence, such as droppings, food remains, staining or actual bats / birds.

Results

Wren Cottage consists of a conventionally built 3-bedroom bungalow with rendered walls and a double pitched roof clad with modern concrete interlocking roof tiles. A small glazed roofed utility room and flat roofed single bay garage has been added to the dwelling's northern elevation. The dwelling has a spacious and well-sealed roof void, that during the survey showed no evidence of bat occupation. Overall, the dwelling is assessed to provide bats with **Negligible Roosting Suitability**.

No evidence of nesting birds was found during the survey.

Recommendations

- A precautionary approach to development in relation to bats.
- Install integral bat roosting and sparrow nest boxes.

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1. Background

- 1.1. In August 2022, Crossman Associates was commissioned by Mr J Murphy to undertake a bat and Bird survey of Wren Cottage, Wrington Lane, Congresbury, Somerset; site Ordnance Survey grid reference ST 4421 6422.
- 1.2. Figure 1 within Appendix I provides a site location map.
- 1.3. The objectives of the survey were to:
 - Make an assessment of the likely presence or absence of bats and birds
 - Identify any legislative or planning policy constraints relevant to the site
 - Determine the need for further surveys, compensation or mitigation

Site Description

- 1.4. The dwelling consists of a small rectangular and conventionally built bungalow with rendered walls and a simple pitched roof clad with modern concrete interlocking roof tiles and uPVC soffits and fascias. The dwelling has a small single bay garage with a simple flat roof clad with felt, the garage has been linked to the dwelling by a small room with a glazed roof that served as a utility roof.
- 1.5. The dwelling includes a small garden that is however larger than average and which surrounds the dwellings northern, southern and eastern elevations. The garden is currently undergoing re landscaping and is devoid of any significant vegetation.
- 1.6. The dwelling is located adjacent to the southern side of Wrington Lane, a minor residential road on the northern side of the rural village of Congresbury. Immediate surroundings are residential and consist of fairly dense housing which occupy the

- sides of a network of minor residential roads. Dwellings tend to have gardens which provides a green element.
- 1.7. The wider landscape to the south is taken up by the remaining village which is largely comprised of dense areas of housing. To the north, west and east the village tapers out and the landscape becomes more rural and less populated and includes areas of farmland, which to the west consists of mainly low lying fields with frequent drains and ditches. To the east an extensive mixed afforested area associated with Urchin and King's Wood.
 - 1.8. The River Yeo flows through the village and at its closest lays approximately 750 m to the south-west of the property.

Legislation

- 1.9. In the UK all species of bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Under this legislation it is a strict liability offence to injure or destroy a bat or to disturb damage or destroy the resting place of a bat. Under this legislation the UK is obliged to fully take into account bats within the planning process and the level of bat activity on-site must be fully assessed prior to the assessment the planning application.
- 1.10. In Britain all wild birds are granted legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended). This legislation protects the birds, their eggs and nests whilst being built or in use.

2. Methodology

Desktop Study

Data search

- 2.1. The MAGIC website was accessed to gain information on any statutory site designations within 4 km of the site that are designated for bats.

National Planning Policy

- 2.2. National Planning Policy has been reviewed for policies that relate to nature conservation relevant to the site.

Field Survey

Bat scoping survey

- 2.3. The building was methodically inspected internally and externally for any evidence of roosting bats, including actual bats, droppings, urine staining and evidence of feeding activity such as discarded insect wings and cases.
- 2.4. The building was also assessed for their suitability to support roosting bats by considering several factors including whether bats can access internal and external voids within the building and whether these voids provide adequate protection and shelter for roosting bats. If the building is not confirmed as a roost, it is assessed from High to Negligible Suitability as follows;

- **High Suitability** – many roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be old, large and rural

- **Moderate Suitability** – some roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be old, rural with some recent maintenance
- **Low Suitability** – few roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be modern, urban and well maintained
- **Negligible Suitability** – insignificant roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be small, modern, urban and very well maintained.

Birds

- 2.5. The building was also inspected for the presence of birds including barn owl *Tyto alba* house sparrow *Passer domesticus* and barn swallow *Hirundo rustica*. The building was checked for field signs including nesting material, accumulations of droppings and/or pellets.

3. Results

Desktop Study

Data Search

- 3.1. The MAGIC website informed of the following statutory sites within 4 km of the site designated for bats.

North Somerset and Mendip Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

- 3.2. The North Somerset and Mendip Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is designated as a site of international significance for bats. The North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC as a whole is designated for several important hibernation sites for Annex II species; lesser horseshoe bats *Rhinolophus hipposideros* and hibernation and maternity roost sites for greater horseshoe bats *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* (supporting 3% of the UK population) as well as for Annex I habitats, semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (important orchid sites) and Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines.
- 3.3. The SAC also comprises several component Sites of Special Scientific Importance (SSSIs) including the King's and Urchin Wood SSSI and Brockley Combe Stables SSSI both of which support important greater horseshoe bat maternity roosts.
- 3.4. The northern boundary of The King's and Urchin Wood complex lies approximately 450 m to the east of the site.
- 3.5. The zone is divided into three distinct areas; A, B & C which reflect the likely importance of the habitats for greater and lesser horseshoe bats and proximity to maternity roosts. Within the consultation zone development is likely to be subject to particular requirements, depending on the sensitivity of the site. The guidance

- also identifies the juvenile sustenance zones for both the horseshoe species which lay 1 km around known maternity roosts.
- 3.6. The proposal site lies within Band A of the North Somerset Bat Consultation Zone for greater horseshoe bats and Band B for lesser horseshoe bats.
 - 3.7. The property is situated within and surrounded by a largely built up environment, which is characterised by residential housing, this setting provides a sub-optimal foraging and commuting habitat for bats, including horseshoe bats which tend to favour un-lit rural habitats.
 - 3.8. The proposed development is small scale and is considered to result in a neutral impact to the SAC associated with Urchin and King's Wood. No further survey work in respect of horseshoe bats is considered to be necessary.

Planning Policy

- 3.9. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) contains sections of relevance to nature conservation that include:
 - Paragraph 174: To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
 - a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation;
 - b) and promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

- Paragraph 175: When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:
 - a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
 - b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
 - c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons⁵⁸ and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
 - d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Field Survey

Bat scoping survey

- 3.10. Survey work was undertaken by Fairbrass Knowles an experienced ecologist and fully licensed bat worker; licence number 12392-CLS-CLS. The survey took place on 01 September 2022. Both the dwelling and the garage were full accessible.
- 3.11. The external and internal conditions of the building is described in the table below and photographic reference can be found within Appendix II.
- 3.12. A table within Appendix III; information sheets set out the criteria for the way a building is assessed for its potential to support roosting bats.

Table 1: building description and bat suitability.

Building	Description	Factors that increase likelihood of bats	Factors that decrease likelihood of bats	Evidence of bats	Potential for bats
Dwelling	<p>A small and conventionally built 3 bedroom bungalow with rendered walls and a simple double pitched roof clad with modern style concrete interlocking roof tiles. The roof had modern and well-fitted uPVC soffits and fascias.</p> <p>The dwelling has a large and spacious roof void supported by a standard style timber cut and pitch roof, a basic floor covers much of the floor and the sarking layer is of traditional type 1 felt, which remains well-fitted throughout. A glazed window fitted to the southern gable provides a moderate level of natural light.</p> <p>The dwelling is thought to date from the 1960's and remains in good condition.</p> <p>The dwelling has a small single bay garage with rendered walls and felt</p>	<p>The village lies adjacent to rural habitats which include a designated bat SAC.</p> <p>Additionally, the presence of small gardens provide potential habitat for more light / urban tolerant bats; typically pipistrelle species.</p>	<p>Roofs consist of tight-fitting concrete interlocking roof tiles with concrete ridges (dwelling), glazed panels (utility room) and flat felt (garage).</p> <p>Eaves and verges are of well fitted uPVC, with cement mortar infill for the tiled verges on the dwelling.</p> <p>All roofs remain intact and well-fitted and provide well-sealed features.</p> <p>All walls remain free of any significant cracks or crevices.</p> <p>Overall, the dwelling lacks any significant potential roosting features (PRF's) for bats.</p>	<p>No bats, bat droppings or any bat related evidence was discovered during the survey.</p>	Negligible

Building	Description	Factors that increase likelihood of bats	Factors that decrease likelihood of bats	Evidence of bats	Potential for bats
	flat roof and uPVC fascias. The garage has been linked to the dwelling via a small and narrow room that serves as a utility room fitted with a glazed roof. The garage and utility room are a little tired but remain sound with watertight roofs.		The roof void was thoroughly examined and showed no evidence of bat occupation.		

Birds

- 3.13. No bird nests, birds, bird droppings or any other bird related evidence was found in association with any aspect of the dwelling or the garage.

Evaluation

Bats

Dwelling and garage

- 3.14. During the scoping survey, no droppings, staining, feeding remains or actual bats were observed.
- 3.15. Both the dwelling and garage are constructed from modern, uniform materials which include rendered walls, tight fitting soffits and roofs clad with modern, concrete interlocking roof tiles, glazed panels and flat felt. This results in a lack any significant crevices and in the case of the dwelling a well-sealed roof void.

Bat habitat

- 3.16. The property is situated within a village setting that is dominated by mainly residential areas, this leads to a sub-optimal habitat for bats, however the presence of small gardens does provide potential habitat for more urban / light tolerant bat species, typically common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1. The recommendations in the paragraphs below should be followed to help ensure that wildlife and important ecological features are protected during the course of works. Recommendations also set out mitigation measures to minimise harm where this cannot be avoided and provide compensation measures to allow the proposals to meet current legislative and planning policy objectives.
- 4.2. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) states that a public authority must 'in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity; Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat'.
- 4.3. Under the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged.

Species recommendations

Bats

- 4.4. Due to the lack of evidence of roosting bats within any aspect of the dwelling, it is not considered necessary or beneficial to undertake any further survey work.
- 4.5. Due to the transitory nature of bats, there is a small possibility that bats could be encountered during demolition / renovation works; therefore, all works must proceed under a cautionary approach. Tiles and roof panels will be removed in a vertical rather than horizontal sliding motion. Soffits and masonry will be dismantled using a 'soft' approach taking care with cavity walls where present. All site workers will be vigilant at all times and in the very unlikely event that a bat is

found, then works must stop immediately and advice should be sought from Crossman Associates or Natural England (telephone number 0300 0603900).

Other species

Hedgehog

- 4.6. In the UK hedgehogs are listed on schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as Amended which makes it illegal to kill or capture wild hedgehogs. Hedgehogs are also listed as a species of 'principal importance' under the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities Act 2006, which is meant to confer a 'duty of responsibility' to public bodies.
- 4.7. The dwelling and those of neighbouring properties have gardens which provide potential habitat for hedgehog.
- 4.8. Excavated holes and trenches on building sites have the potential to trap wildlife including hedgehogs leading to the potential suffering and death of the animal (s) particularly if they become filled with water.
- 4.9. If during the development excavated holes / trenches are likely to be left open, then timber builders' planks should be fitted as ramps to enable any wildlife including hedgehogs a means of escape.

Biodiversity gain

- 4.10. The following paragraphs provide recommendations for biodiversity gain, which is a requirement under national planning policy.

Bats and birds

Bats

- 4.11. It is recommended that one Habitat bat boxes (type 001) is installed within the new development. This model is the size of a large shoebox and is designed for a

- variety of bat species and has good thermal properties making it suitable as both a maternity roost and hibernation roost. A variety of facings can be fitted to suit any existing brick, wood, stonework or rendered finish, making the box unobtrusive and aesthetically pleasing.
- 4.12. The bat box ideally should be placed beneath the eaves or on gable ends and away from windows and doors and ideally should be fitted in a location that gives bats immediate access to foraging habitat. A southerly / westerly elevation is desirable. But the final placement should be done in consultation with a suitably qualified ecologist.
- 4.13. An information sheet detailing this type of bat roosting box can be found in Appendix III.
- 4.14. Boxes are available from www.habibat.co.uk or www.wildlifeservices.co.uk

Birds

- 4.15. There is an opportunity during the development works to enhance the ecological value of the site for birds and new nesting opportunities can be provided for the local bird population with a particular emphasis on house sparrows (which have suffered significant decline) which can be easily accommodated on site. Inexpensive sparrow nesting boxes can be fitted either integrally or externally beneath the eaves of existing dwelling or the new extension. 2 number sparrow terraces are recommended. Sparrow nest boxes are ideally fitted below eaves on northerly or easterly facing elevations. Suitable models include the Vivara Woodstone Sparrow Nest Box, which is also suitable for surface mounting. This model is strong, durable, long lasting and available in stone colour and is available from www.wildcare.co.uk or www.wildlifeservices.co.uk
- 4.16. The final fitting location should be completed in consultation with a suitably qualified ecologist.

4.17. An information sheet on bird nesting boxes is provided under Appendix III; information sheets.

5. Limitations

- 5.1. This report records wildlife found during the survey and anecdotal evidence of sightings. It does not record any plants or animals that may appear at other times of the year and were therefore not evident at the time of visit.
- 5.2. This report represents a preliminary assessment only. Recommendations and conclusions are subject to change should further findings significantly differ from those collected from the survey efforts to date.
- 5.3. The advice contained in this report relate primarily to factual survey results and general guidance only. On all legal matters you are advised to take legal advice.

6. References

Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) *Bats and Lighting in the UK* BCT

HMSO (1981) *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and subsequent amendments)*. HMSO

HMSO (1995) *Biodiversity*. The UK Steering Group Report

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) *Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Reptiles and Amphibians* (2004) JNCC

Mitchell-Jones, A.J (2004) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines* English Nature

Mitchell-Jones, A.J , & McLeish A.P. (2012) *The Bat Worker's Manual* (4th Edition)

Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)
Website at www.magic.gov.uk

Stace, C. (1997) *New Flora of the British Isles 2nd Edition*. Cambridge University Press

TSO (2012) *National Planning Policy Framework*. TSO

TSO (2006) *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act* TSO

Appendix I – Site Figures



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Site location



Client James Murphy
Title Location plan
Site Wren Cottage, Congresbury
Figure 1
Date 01 September 2022
Scale Not to scale



Appendix II – Site Photographs



Photographs 1- 3



Photograph 1:

Eastern elevation



Photograph 2:

Southern gable



Photograph 3:

Western elevation

Photographs 4 - 6



Photograph 4:

The garage and utility room that occupies the northern elevation.



Photograph 5:

Dwelling
Soffits and fascias are all of uPVC; all sections remain well-fitted and well-sealed providing no significant crevices.



Photograph 6:

Garage
The eaves are fitted with simple timber fascias, all fit well and provide no significant crevices.

Photographs 7 - 9



Photograph 7:

The roof of the main dwelling is clad with modern interlocking roof tiles, this results in a well-sealed roof.



Photograph 8:

The garage has a flat felt roof while the utility room is glazed panels. Both roofs remain well-sealed



Photograph 9:

The dwelling provides one, rectangular shaped roof void with a floor to ridge height of approximately 2.1 m. A single window present on the southern elevation results in a relatively well illuminated area. The void provided no evidence of bat occupation.

Photographs 10 - 11



Photograph 10:

The garage provides a single and simple bay.
The garage provided no evidence of bat occupation.



Photograph 11:

Utility room.



Appendix III– Information Sheets

Bat Habitat Suitably Criteria

Bat Roosting Suitability	Criteria	Survey requirement to prove likely absence
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.	No further survey work required
Low	A building, structure or tree with one or more potential roosting sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically; however, these possible roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used by large numbers of bats and are unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation roosts.	One activity survey
Medium	A building, structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to the size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habit, but is unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.	Two activity surveys
High	A building, structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.	Three activity surveys

Survey requirements are taken from Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (2016), which is the recognised industry standard guidance used by local planning authorities and other statutory consultees.

Information sheet Artificial bird nesting boxes for Buildings: Swifts, house martins and house sparrows



Habibat house sparrow nest box



Vivara woodstone sparrow nest box; suitable for both integral fitment or surface mounting

Ibstock Swift boxes are also suitable for house sparrows. Can be customised to suit any exterior finish. Site boxes under eaves, away from windows and direct sunlight.

Sparrow boxes should be grouped together and be at least 2 m of the ground. The boxes can be also be sited on gable walls. At least 3 per averaged size house.

Swifts boxes should be at least 5 m above the ground with an clear un-obstructed flight path.

Schwegler house martin box model 9 b double is a suitable box for house martins and can be used to encourage the uptake of a building by this species. The boxes can be attached to the exterior walls in a sheltered position; ideally beneath the eaves. At least two sets should be placed on an averaged size house.

Ibstock Box



Schwegler model 9b