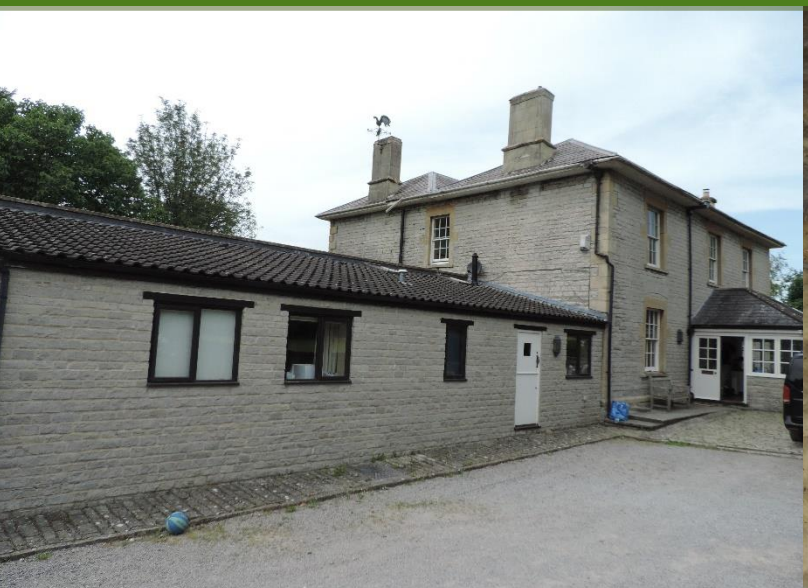
NashEcology

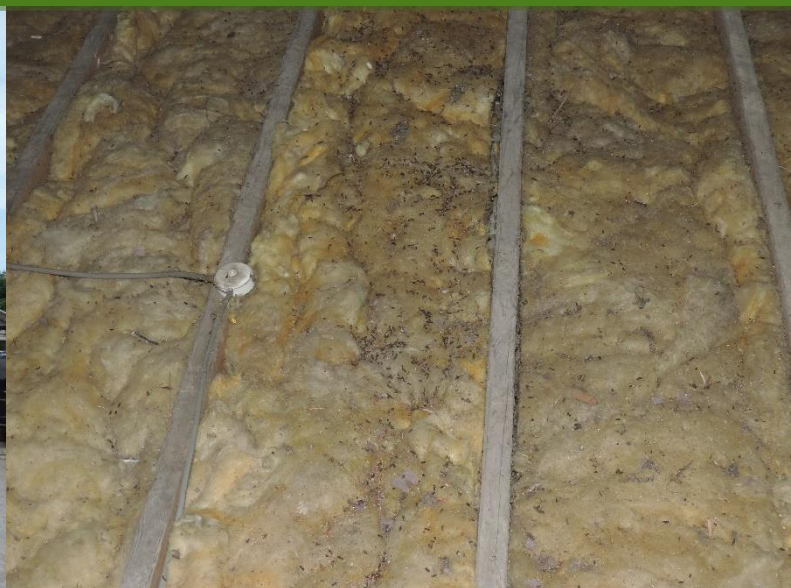
The Grange, West Pennard

Bat & Bird Scoping Report

Prepared for: Mr Ed Martin

Date: July 2022





This report has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Code of Professional Conduct of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.

Limitations

Nash Ecology Ltd has prepared this Report for the sole use of Ed Martin ("Client") in accordance with the Agreement under which our services were performed.

The conclusions and recommendations contained in this Report are based upon information provided by others and upon the assumption that all relevant information has been provided by those parties from whom it has been requested and that such information is accurate.

The methodology adopted and the sources of information used by Nash Ecology Ltd in providing its services are outlined in this Report. The work described in this Report was undertaken in June 2022 and is based on the conditions encountered and the information available during this period of time.

Nash Ecology Ltd disclaim any undertaking or obligation to advise any person of any change in any matter affecting the Report, which may come or be brought to Nash Ecology attention after the date of the Report.

This report is considered 'valid' for up to two years from the date the walkover survey was conducted. If an application is made after this, then it is advisable to undertake an updated survey. In addition, any significant change to the project should result in consultation with an ecologist as reassessment of the ecological constraints may be required.

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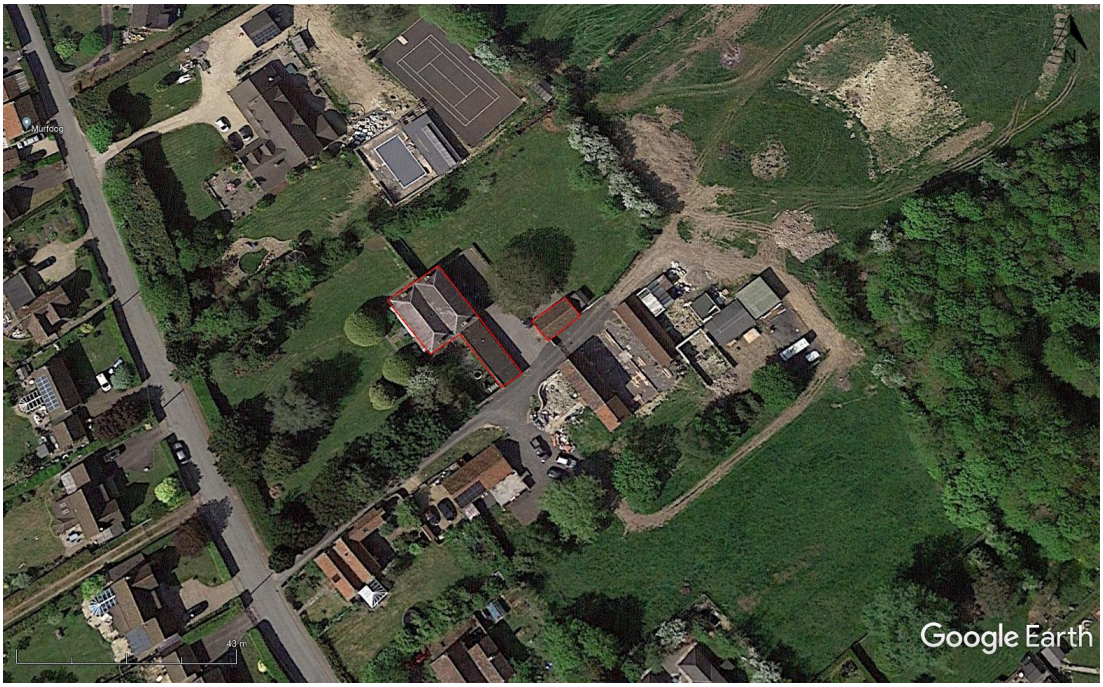
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Scope

Nash Ecology Ltd was instructed to carry out a bat and bird assessment of a residential property and associated garage at 'The Grange, Newton Lane, West Pennard BA6 8NL' (Figure 1). The assessment was commissioned to inform a planning application to extend the property, which would require the demolition of the Garage. As the works will be restricted to the footprint of the existing building, the ecological receptors most likely to be encountered are bats and birds. As the proposed works have the potential to adversely affect both taxa, a targeted assessment was commissioned to ascertain whether either were present.

The remainder of this report provides methods, results and a discussion of potential impacts including, where necessary, a suitable mitigation strategy.

Figure 1: Site Location (Google Earth, 2020)



1.2 Legislation and Planning Policy Summary

1.2.1 Summary of Legislation Pertinent to Bats

All bats are protected under Schedule 2 the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). When taken together it is illegal to:

- Deliberately disturb, capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Obstruct, damage or destroy a bat roosting place (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time); and
- Possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat (dead or alive) or any part thereof.

Seven species of bat are included on Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 as 'Species of Principal Importance for Conservation in England'. These include:

- Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*);
- Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*);
- Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*);
- Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*);
- Brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*);
- Greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*); and
- Lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*).

Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 places a duty of care on competent authorities to consider biodiversity as a material consideration when discharging their normal functions.

1.2.2 Summary of Legislation Pertinent to Birds

Nesting birds are protected through their inclusion on the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under the Act, it is an offence to harm a bird, its eggs or young whilst occupying a nest. For those species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a bird that is on or near an 'active' nest.

Forty-nine species of birds are listed on Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 as 'Species of Principal Importance for Conservation in England'.

1.2.3 Planning Policy Summary

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 was considered in the preparation of this report. The NPPF specifies the obligations that the Local Authorities and the UK Government have regarding statutory designated sites and protected species under UK and international legislation and how this is to be delivered in the planning system. Protected or notable habitats and species should be considered as a material consideration in planning decisions and may therefore make some sites unsuitable for particular types of development. If the development is permitted, mitigation measures may be required to avoid or minimise impacts on certain habitats and species, or where impact is unavoidable, compensation may be required.

2 METHODS

2.1 Desk-based Study

A desk-based study was carried out to identify designated sites and biological records relating to the site. The Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website was consulted to identify statutory sites within 2 km. The MAGIC website was also used to review granted bat mitigation licences (EPSML) within 1 km. The search was based on grid reference ST 6482 1207.

2.2 Field Survey

2.2.1 Initial Bat Inspection

A Natural England (Class 2) licensed bat ecologist undertook a full inspection (both external and internal) of The Grange and Garage on 16th June 2022. During the survey, the surveyor inspected the buildings for exterior roosting locations and possible access points to each buildings' interior. An internal inspection for suitable roost locations and evidence of bat occupancy (such as droppings, urine spots, an absence of cobwebs and bats themselves) was then undertaken.

As bats are a cryptic group and often move between roosts, both within and between years, their presence is not always easy to detect. The buildings were assessed for their Bat Roost Potential (BRP), following published guidance (Collins, 2016). The BRP categories are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Bat Roost Potential Categories (Collins 2016 and Mitchell-Jones 2004)

Roost Potential	Description
Known or Confirmed	Confirmed signs of bat presence/ occupation (droppings, oily staining around entry points, insect remains, odour, scratching) and actual bat presence.
High	A 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.
Moderate	A structure or tree 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).
Low	A structure 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). A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen form the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.
Negligible	No features suitable for roosting bats. Includes structures constructed from unsuitable materials e.g. prefabricated with steel and sheet material. Structure is draughty, light and cool buildings with no roosting opportunities. High levels of regular disturbance including external lighting. Building is isolated for areas of foraging habitat. In the case of trees, no potential roosting features are present, or features have no potential to support roosting bats.

2.2.2 Initial Bird Inspection

Concurrent with the bat inspection, the building was inspected for evidence of nesting birds.

2.3 Survey Limitations

No constraints to the aims of the survey were encountered.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Desk-based Study

No statutory sites, designated for bats or birds, were identified within 2 km.

A single historical European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) was identified within 1 km. Licence EPSM2011-3259, awarded in 2011, permitted the destruction of a non-breeding roost of brown long-eared bats. The licence was located c. 895 m to the south of Site.

3.2 Site Context

The Grange was located within the village of West Pennard in Somerset. Both the house and garage were set within a large residential garden to the east of Newtown Lane. Further residential properties were located to the north, east and south. Newton Lane did not include any street lamps near The Grange making it suitably dark for bats. The wider landscape was dominated by agricultural land.

3.3 Field Survey

3.3.1 Building Inspection

The Grange

The Grange was a large, detached two-storey residential property (Plate 1); there was also a single-storey extension to the south (Plate 2) and a porch to the east. The walls were constructed from stone and were in good condition, lacking any cracks or crevices. Intact doors and windows were found throughout. The two-storey section included large wooden soffits, which were damaged in part and included gaps behind them (Plate 3). The roof over the two-storey section included pitched and hipped sections both of which were clad in slate. Several slipped slates were noted (Plate 4). The roof over single-storey extension was pitched and clad in double-roman tiles; two skylights were present. This roof was in good condition and lacked any slipped, raised or missing tiles. The roof over the porch was hipped and clad in slate; again, a skylight window was present.

Potential access points and external roost locations included behind the soffit boxes and beneath slipped tiles.

Plate 1: The Grange (viewed from north)

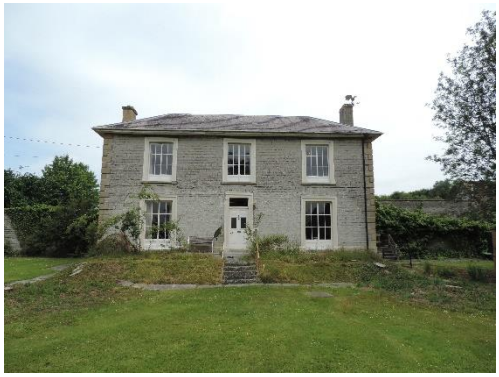


Plate 2: The Grange (viewed from southwest)

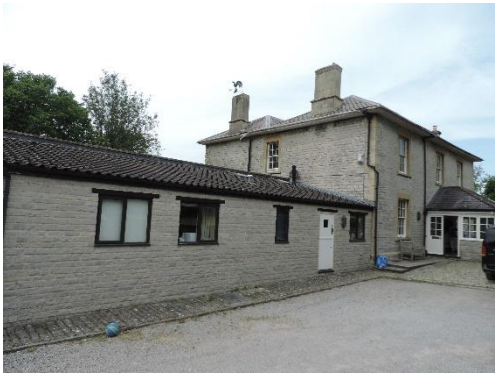


Plate 3: Example of Gaps Behind Soffit Box

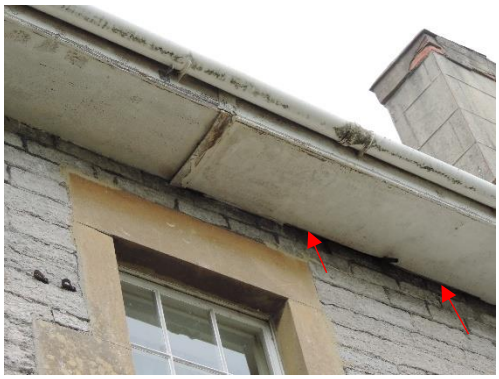
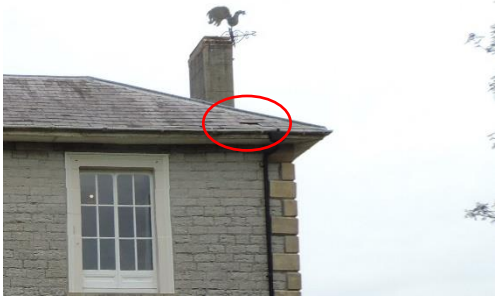


Plate 4: Example of Missing Tile



Internally, The Grange contained a single loft void, which measured c. 14 m (L) x 6.5 m (W) x 2 m (H) (Plate 5). Part of the roof was lined with bitumastic felt (northernmost pitch) and part unlined (southernmost pitch). The roof was supported by a sealed wooden frame. The floor was covered with fibreglass insulation. Daylight could be seen coming from gaps at the eaves.

A pile of c. 1,000 medium-sized droppings (likely a species of long-eared bat) was recorded on the floor (Plate 6). Based on their appearance, the droppings appeared to be at least one year old and likely older. Further bat droppings were scattered throughout the loft space. No live bats were recorded.

Plate 5: The Grange Loft Space

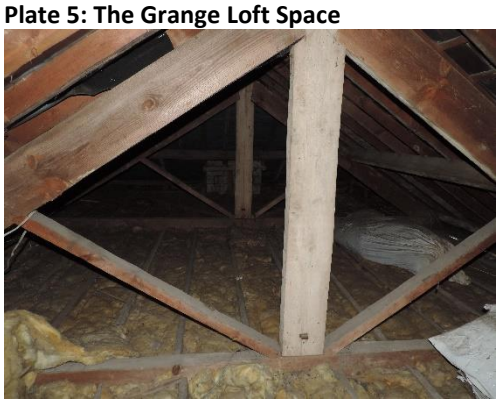


Plate 6: Bat Droppings in Loft Space

Based on the presence of bat droppings coupled with potential roost locations that could not be inspected, The Grange was assessed as having High Bat Roost Potential.

The Garage

The Garage was constructed from red brick with single-skin wooden weather boarding on its west-facing gable (Plates 7 & 8). Whilst the external walls were in a good condition, the weather boarding included large gaps. Further gaps were present at the wall tops throughout the Garage. The roof was pitched and clad in pan tiles; many of the ridge and roof tiles were raised, slipped or missing (Plates 9 & 10).

Plate 7: The Garage (western aspect)

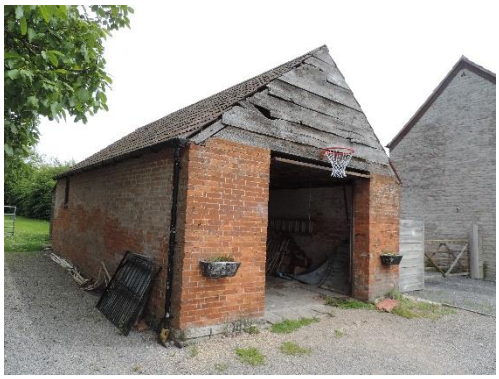


Plate 8: The Garage (eastern aspect)

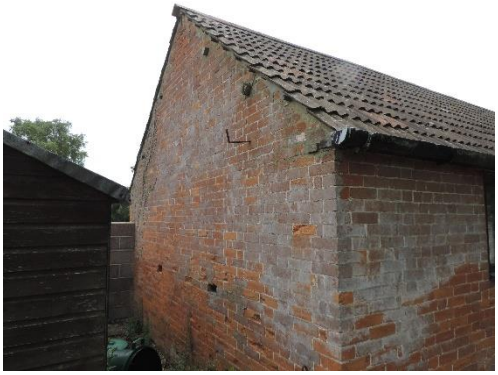


Plate 9: Example of Damaged Ridge Tile

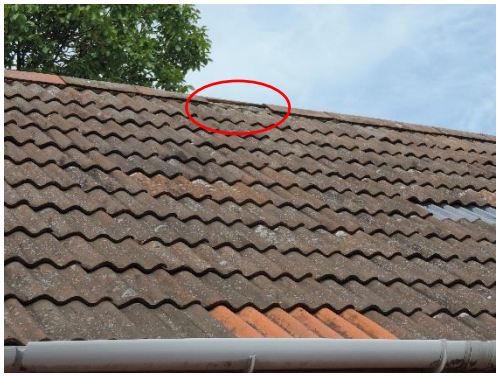
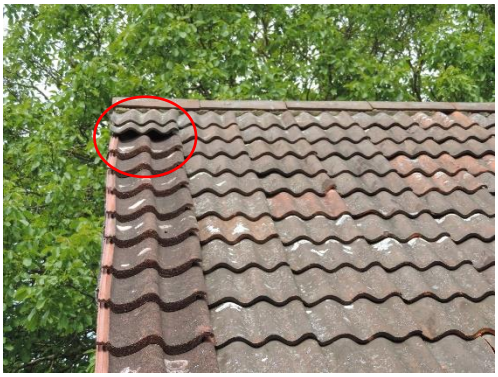


Plate 10: Example of Raised Tiles



Internally, the roof was lined with bitumen felt that was torn in places. An open chimney was located within the Garage; this was inspected and no signs of bats were recorded. No bat droppings were recorded; however, the Garage included features that could not be fully inspected (i.e. beneath ridge and roof tiles). Accordingly, the Garage was assessed as having Moderate Bat Roost Potential.

Birds

No evidence of nesting birds was recorded from The Grange. A long-disused bird nest was located on the chimney in the Garage.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Bats

The Grange was assessed as having High Bat Roost; none of the bat droppings appeared to be fresh (i.e. from the current season), which would have resulted in an assessment of Confirmed Bat Roost. The bat droppings, likely from a species of long-eared bat, were recovered from the loft void. In addition to this, the presence of potentially suitable external roost features (i.e. soffit boxes and roof tiles) that could not be fully inspected were noted. Further survey will be required to ascertain the status of the roost. The Garage did not include signs of bats but did include potential roost features that could not be fully inspected. Accordingly, it was assessed as having Moderate BRP (see Table 1).

As all bat roosts are protected from damage by domestic law (see Section 1.2), it is important to establish presence / likely absence prior to submitting a planning application. To this end, further surveys will be required. For High potential buildings (i.e. The Grange), a minimum of three dusk emergence surveys will be required (Collins, 2016; BCT, 2022). Each survey should comprise a minimum of three surveyors to provide adequate coverage of the property. Moderate potential buildings (i.e. The Garage) will require two emergence surveys with a third only being required if bats are recorded emerging from the building. As the long-eared bats emerge later in the evening and do not always echolocate on emergence, the use of IR equipment is recommended. The surveys should be undertaken between May and August and ideally spaced apart by a minimum of two weeks.

A sample of droppings should be submitted to a laboratory for DNA analysis. This is required by Natural England to distinguish between the brown long-eared bat and the much rarer grey long-eared bat (*Plecotus austriacus*).

Many bat species, including long-eared bats, are photophobic and actively avoid illuminated areas. To prevent further impacts on the bats, a sensitive lighting strategy is recommended. The sensitive lighting strategy should comprise the following broad elements (BCT, 2018):

- No excessive lighting - use only the minimum amount required for safety;
- Minimise light spill – use short columns and direct light downwards and in towards the Site;
- Use narrow spectrum bulbs that emit minimal ultra-violet light - avoid white and blue wavelengths of the spectrum, which can attract invertebrates;
- Lights should either peak higher than 550 nm or use glass lantern covers to filter UV light;
- Avoid using reflective surfaces under lights; and
- Minimise the amount of light spill by good design.

4.2 Birds

A disused nest was recorded in the Garage. The nest should be reinspected immediately prior to works commencing to ensure that it is not in use.

4.3 Opportunities for Enhancement

Appropriate opportunities for enhancement would be determined following further bat survey.

5 REFERENCES

BCT (2018) Guidance Note 08/18: Bats and artificial lighting in the UK. Bats and the Built Environment series. BCT, London

BCT (2022) Interim Guidance Note: Use of night vision aids for bat emergence surveys and further comment on dawn surveys. BCT, London

Collins J. (Ed) (2016) Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition. BCT, London

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