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Preliminary Bat Roost Appraisal at Castle Moat House, Castle Road, Offton, Suffolk, IP8 4RN.

On Behalf Of:

Mr. T. Wells

May 2020

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0 SUMMARY

0.1 Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd. was commissioned by Mr. T. Wells to undertake a Preliminary Roost Appraisal for bats at Castle Moat House, Castle Road, Offton, IP8 4RN. The report is required to accompany a planning application for alterations and extensions to an existing single-storey outbuilding to form a single new dwelling.

0.2 The site was visited on the 7th May 2020 by experienced ecologist James Pickerin BSc (Hons) GCIEEM (ecologist licensed to survey for bats - level 2) to survey for the risk of presence and the risk of impact to bats and bat roosts.

0.3 The site was an existing outbuilding used for general storage. The building was constructed with flint walls on the north elevation and also in a central dividing wall, these walls were also double layered. The remainder of the walls were brick. The building supported a pitched, lined, slate roof, with a mix of modern and older style timber frame and joinery. The outbuilding was attached to a double-storey residential dwelling to the east.

0.4 The buildings were located within a rural hamlet, located south of the village of Offton, surrounded by a small woodland, wooded moat, grassland, and arable agriculture.

0.5 Internally, the outbuilding was split into several compartments: the northern half, south-east quarter and south-west quarter. The northern section was found to support a number of crevices in and around brick and flintwork, in addition to 'joins' with the eastern abutting wall. Furthermore, a number of moderate-sized bat droppings (>10) (likely brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus*) bat were found on this eastern gable wall beneath the join to the eastern building. It was deemed very likely that the space and join above the wall where the outbuilding attaches to the barn supports a bat roost.

0.6 Externally, despite modern repairs, the flint wall supported many very suitable crevices for roosting bats. It should also be noted that this wall was double skinned and the void between the walls could not be surveyed. Additionally, potential access for bats to the building interior was observed in a number of places over the building.

0.7 Overall, the risk of presence and impact to roosting bats was considered high. Further bat surveys, detailed later in the report, were considered necessary.

0.8 Biodiversity net gain enhancements are also provided in the report in accordance with national planning policy.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd. was commissioned by Mr. T. Wells to undertake a Preliminary Roost Appraisal for bats at Castle Moat House, Castle Road, Offton, IP8 4RN. The report is required to accompany a planning application for alterations and extensions to an existing single-storey outbuilding to form a single new dwelling.

1.1.2 Bats are protected by law and some bat, such as brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus*, are also UK priority species. Protected and priority species are a material consideration for individual planning decisions under the National Planning Policy Framework, 2019 (NPPF) (MHCLG, 2019).

1.1.3 This study and report complies with the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisals (Second Edition, 2017).

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 A local biological bat data search was obtained through Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS) to search for records of protected, priority and rare species of bats.

2.1.2 A desk study for local bat records was undertaken. A search of the Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) was also conducted, to check for statutory nature conservation sites.

2.2 Study Limitations

2.2.1 No major study limitations. The site and surrounds were assessed based on their condition at the time of the survey visit.

2.3 Initial Site Survey

Habitats and Surroundings

2.3.1 The site was visited on the 7th May 2020 by experienced ecologist James Pickerin BSc (Hons) GCIEEM (ecologist licensed to survey for bats - level 2) to survey for the risk of presence and the risk of impact to bats.

2.3.2 Equipment available for use during the survey included: high powered torch, ladder, digital camera, binoculars, and video endoscope.

2.3.3 The survey methods followed English Nature Bat Mitigation Guidelines (English Nature, 2004) and Bat Conservation Trust Best Practice Guidelines, therefore considerations were:

- the availability of access to roosts for bats;
- the presence and suitability of cracks, crevices, tiles, soffits, hollows, ivy growth and other places as roosts;
- signs of bat activity or presence, such as; the bats themselves, droppings, grease marks, scratch marks, urine spatter and prey remains.

2.3.4 The availability of access to roosts was assessed based upon the presence of holes large enough to allow entry to bats and lack of cobwebs and dirt.

2.3.5 The outside of the building was inspected for gaps, cavities, access points and crevices, and any signs of bats (droppings, staining, urine spatter), in accordance with Natural England (English Nature) guidelines (English Nature, 2004).

2.3.6 The inside of the building was then inspected for signs of bat activity and opportunities for roosts. As many crevices as could safely be accessed were checked for suitability and signs of bats. All surfaces were inspected.

3 RESULTS AND RISK

3.1 Site Description & Location

3.1.1 The site was an existing outbuilding used for general storage. The building was constructed with flint walls on the north elevation and also in a central dividing wall, these walls were also double layered. The remainder of the walls were brick. The building supported a pitched, lined, slate roof, with a mix of modern and older style timber frame and joinery. The outbuilding was attached to a double-storey residential dwelling to the east.

3.1.2 The buildings were located within a rural hamlet, located south of the village of Offton, surrounded by a small woodland, wooded moat, grassland, and arable agriculture.

3.1.3 Two statutorily designated sites were located within 2km of the development, these were: Middle Wood, Offton Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), located 600m north-west, and designated due to the site's medieval and complete ancient woodland and associated flora; and Barking Woods SSSI, located 2km north and designated due to the presence of an inter-related group of Ancient Woodlands, supporting associated flora (MAGIC, 2019).

3.1.4 Ancient Woodland is located within 2km of the building, these environments are regarded as irreplaceable habitats (NPPF, 2019). In addition to the two SSSI sites, a significant number of small Ancient Woodlands are present within 2km of the proposed site.

3.2 Data Search

3.2.1 The biological data search conducted on behalf of Skilled Ecology by SBIS

(2019) is summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of local bat records.

Species	Location from the Site	Year of Record
Common pipistrelle (UK & EU protected)	1.55km north-east	2018
Soprano pipistrelle (UK & EU protected)	1.5km north-east	2016
Myotis sp. (UK & EU protected)	1km west	2009
Western barbastelle (UK & EU protected)	1.55km north-east	2018
Noctule (UK & EU protected)	1.5km north-east	2016
Brown long-eared (UK & EU protected)	1.5km north-east	2016

3.3 Protected, Priority & Rare Species

Building Suitability for Bats

3.3.1 Internally, the outbuilding was split into several compartments: the northern half, south-east quarter and south-west quarter. The northern section was found to support a number of crevices in and around brick and flintwork, in addition to 'joins' with the eastern abutting wall. Furthermore, a number of moderate-sized bat droppings (>10) (likely brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus*) bat were found on this eastern gable wall beneath the join to the eastern building. It was deemed very likely that the space and join above the wall where the outbuilding attaches to the barn supports a bat roost.

3.3.2 Externally, despite modern repairs, the flint wall supported many very suitable crevices for roosting bats. It should also be noted that this wall was double skinned and the void between the walls could not be surveyed. Additionally, potential access for bats to the building interior was observed in a number of places over the building.

Habitat Suitability for Bats

3.3.3 The surrounding habitats (woodland, gardens and wooded moat), were likely to produce good quantities of flying insects for feeding bats and shelter for commuting bats, indicating the likely presence of at least moderate quantities of foraging bats of the more common and widespread species.

4 DISCUSSION OF RISK AND LEGISLATION

4.1 Protected, Priority & Rare Species

Bats

4.1.1 Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 and under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Some bats are also UK priority species. A summary of the offences likely to be relevant to development are:

- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or take a bat;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection, whether bats are present or not;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any bat;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection;
- Deliberately disturb a bat anywhere.

4.1.2 Bats have been recorded locally (SBIS, 2020), and local habitats were likely to support at least moderate numbers of bats.

4.1.3 However, it should be noted that the woodland, moat, and any other natural habitats are not scheduled for disturbance, and that a single residential house will replace the demolished building, causing no net-loss in foraging habitat for bats.

4.1.4 Building interiors and exteriors were thoroughly surveyed for evidence of bats. Evidence of bats was identified within the northern half of the outbuilding, and given the location of bat droppings, it was considered highly likely that a bat roost was present. Furthermore, the flint walls were deemed to support good bat roosting potential for crevice-dwelling bat species. No individual bats, other bat droppings, urine stains, or any other evidence of bats were found.

4.1.5 It was considered highly likely that bats may be roosting in areas proposed for disturbance and if bats are present the risk of impact from the proposed development is high.

4.1.6 Therefore, in accordance with national bat survey guidelines, further surveys detailed later in the report are required to determine presence or absence of roosting bats to inform mitigation requirements.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Further Surveys & Mitigation

Bat surveys

5.2.1 To determine the presence or absence of roosting bats, numbers and species of roosting bats and use of the site by bats, three further dusk emergence or dawn re-entry bat surveys should be undertaken. The surveys should be undertaken by two experienced bat ecologist's using bat detection equipment following Natural England and Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines. The surveys can only be undertaken in suitable weather conditions between May and September and need to be spread apart by two weeks each.

5.2 Precautionary Measures

Bats

5.2.2 To minimise any residual risk of impact to locally foraging bats, the following precautionary measure should be undertaken (following the results of survey and any mitigation (if necessary)):

- Any new proposed external lighting should be minimised. Where external lighting is required it should be warm white LED lamps with glass glazing, rather than plastic, as these produce the least amount of UV light possible, minimising the attraction effects on insects and minimising disturbance to local bats;
- Any external lighting proposed for the development should be aimed carefully, to minimise illumination of boundary habitats and avoid light spillage into the sky, or horizontally out from any buildings, by using hoods or directional lighting, and preferentially use low-level bollard lighting;
- External security lighting should be set on short timers and be sensitive to large moving objects only, to prevent any passing bats switching them on;

5.3 Enhancements

5.3.1 By following the below biodiversity enhancements, the development will improve the site for local wildlife and provide a net-gain in accordance with national planning policy (NPPF, 2019).

5.3.2 The addition of bat boxes and bird boxes on the new building will increase the potential roosting and nesting sites for local bats and birds. Specifically, the following boxes should be used;

- 1 x Integrated Eco Bat Box (on building);
- 1 x Vivara Pro Integrated Sparrow Nesting Box (on building);

- 2 x Swallow nesting cups (under roofline of new dwelling);

5.3.3 Bat boxes and bird boxes can be purchased on-line through suppliers such as The Wildlife Shop and NHBS.

5.3.4 Integrated bat and bird boxes should be installed high in new building, with the bird boxes positioned between north-west and north-east, and the bat boxes between south-west and south-east, with at least one bat box on each new building.

5.3.5 Any new lawn area required for creations/restoration for the garden should use a wildflower see mix such as EM1 from Emorsgate Seeds.

5.3.6 Any additional soft landscaping (shrubs and trees) should be native and wildlife attracting.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Signs or evidence of roosting bats were discovered. The building support high potential for roosting bats and the risk of impact to roosting bats was considered high. In accordance with national bat survey guidelines further bat surveys, were considered necessary and are detailed in the report.

6.2 By following the biodiversity enhancements provided, the proposed development will be enhanced further for the benefit of local wildlife to create a net-gain in accordance with national planning policy.

7 REFERENCES

Bat Conservation Trust (2016) *Bat Surveys- Good Practise Guidelines, 3rd Edition*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

English Nature (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines Version 2004*. English Nature, Peterborough.

SBIS (2020). *Bat Search Results - Offton TM0652749250*. SBIS, Ipswich.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019). *National Planning Policy Framework, February 2019.* Fry Building, London.

Internet reference: *www.gridreferencefinder.com* (accessed in 2020).

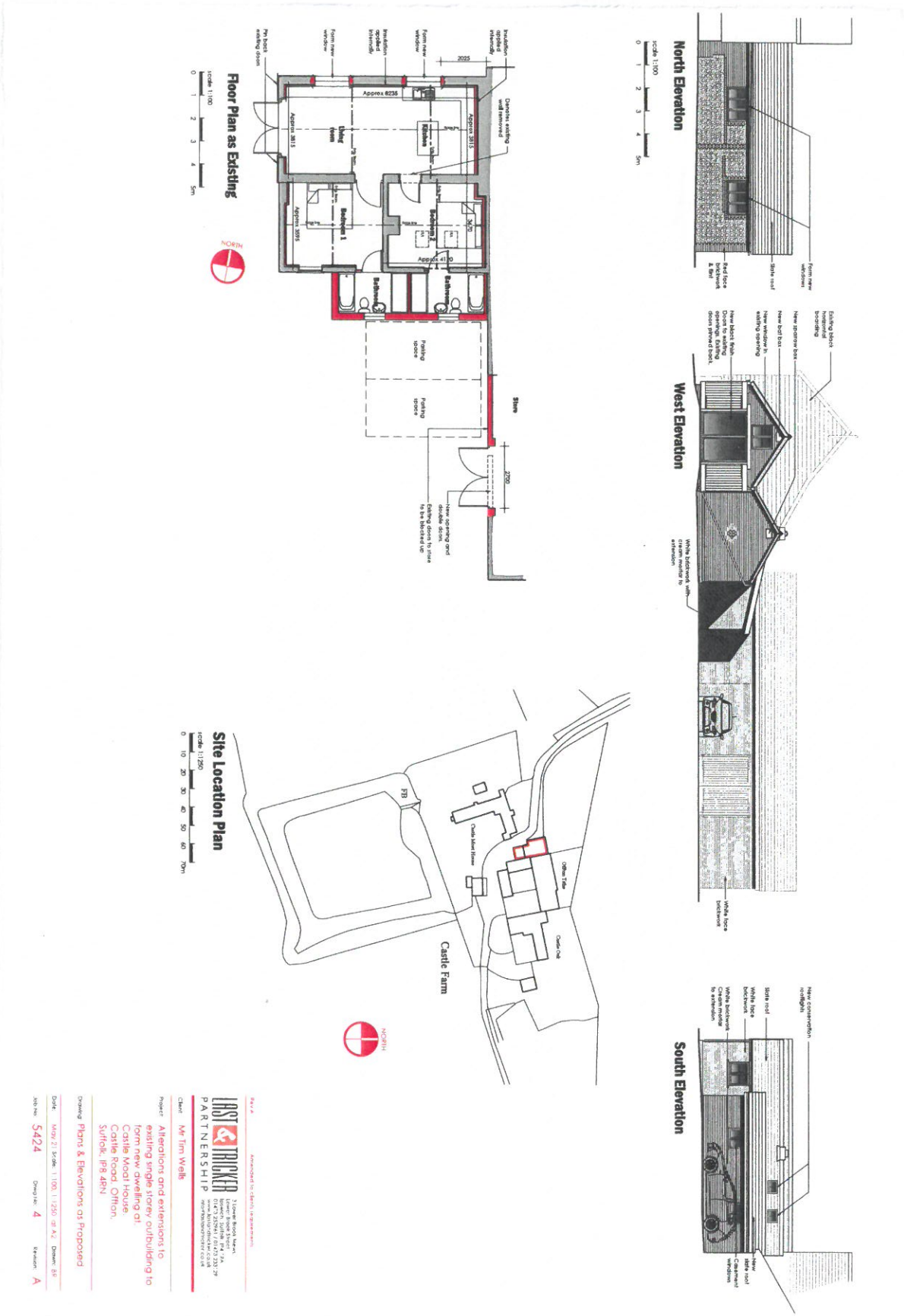
www.magic.gov.uk (accessed in 2020).

8 APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix 1: Figures

Figure 1: Site location – Castle Moat House Outbuilding; outline in red.

Figure 2: Proposed plan.



8.2 Appendix 2: Photographs

Photograph 1: View of outbuilding from south-west. 7th May 2020.

Photograph by James Pickerin 2020

Photograph 2: View of outbuilding from north-west. 7th May 2020.

Photograph by James Pickerin 2020

Photograph 3: View of northern half interior. 7th May 2020.

Photograph by James Pickerin 2020

Photograph 4: View of south-western section interior. 7th May 2020.

Photograph by James Pickerin 2020

Photograph 5: View of south-eastern section interior. 7th May 2020.

Photograph by James Pickerin 2020

Photograph 6: View of potential roost feature in flint wall. 7th May 2020.

Photograph by James Pickerin 2020

Photograph 7: View of potential roost feature in flint wall. 7th May 2020.

Photograph by James Pickerin 2020

Photograph 8: View of internal gable with number of bat droppings. 7th May 2020.

Photograph by James Pickerin 2020

Photograph 9: Example of bat dropping on internal wall. 7th May 2020.

Photograph by James Pickerin 2020

Photograph 10: View of join between adjacent building and outbuilding above location bat droppings observed. 7th May 2020.

Photograph by James Pickerin 2020