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CLEAVE COTTAGE LITTLE TORRINGTON DEVON

Ecology Survey

July 2022

A REPORT TO:

Mr & Mrs W Prouse
Cleave Cottage
Little Torrington
Devon
EX38 8NA

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PES reference: PES/1502

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Executive Summary

Penpont Ecology Services Ltd was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Survey of the house and land at Cleave Cottage, Little Torrington, Devon, EX38 8NA. This was carried out to inform a planning application to demolish the existing property to make way for a replacement dwelling.

The survey comprised a desk study, building inspection and one dusk emergence survey.

Bats

Evidence of bat presence was not identified, and it is considered these species are likely absent and shall not provide a constraint to the proposed works being undertaken.

Nesting Birds

Sparrows are identified nesting in the roof eaves. The following is recommended:

- *Demolition works shall not commence during the bird nesting season which occurs between March and August.*

Land

The land on which the new house will be located comprises part of a larger field of improved grassland. The grassland is of low ecological value; the loss of which will be compensated by the conversion of the existing house's footprint back to garden.

Cleave Cottage – Ecology Survey

1 Introduction

Penpont Ecology Services Ltd was appointed to undertake an Ecology Survey of the house and land at Cleave Cottage, Little Torrington, Devon, EX38 8NA. This was carried out to inform a planning application to demolish the existing property to make way for a replacement dwelling. The survey was undertaken to determine presence/likely absence of protected species and to assess the impact the proposed works may have on any species found to be present.

In England and Wales all bat species are fully protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (amendment (EU Exit)) Regulations 2019, and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is illegal to:

- intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture (or take) bats.
- deliberately disturb a bat in a way that would affect its ability to survive, breed or rear young (or hibernate or migrate in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or (significantly in England, Wales and Scotland) affect the local distribution or abundance of the species.
- recklessly disturb roosting bats or obstruct access to their roosts.
- damage or destroy a roost (this is an 'absolute' offence and need not be deliberate or intentional).
- possess, control, transport, sell, exchange or offer for sale/exchange any live or dead bat or any part of a bat.

** In a court, 'deliberately' will probably be interpreted as someone who, although not intending to capture/injure or kill a bat, performed the relevant action, being sufficiently informed and aware of the consequence his/her action will most likely have.*

Some bat species (Barbastelle, Bechstein's, Soprano Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared, Greater and Lesser Horseshoes) are included on the S41 list of UK Biodiversity Action Plan species. Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, local authorities must consider the conservation of these species in planning decisions.

All nesting birds are protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. Barn Owls are specially protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, making it an offence to;

- intentionally kill, injure or take them
- take, damage or destroy their nest or eggs
- disturb them at the nest

2 Site Description

Cleave Cottage is located at OS Grid Reference: SS 4792 1850 (Fig 1). The building occupies a rural location with the River Torridge 530m to the north east. The surrounding countryside is in agricultural production of permanent pasture, grass leys and arable. Fields are bordered by typical Devon hedgebanks providing good

connectivity with surrounding riparian habitats associated with the River Torridge (Fig 2).

Cleave Cottage is of rendered block construction with a man-made tiled roof (Fig 3).

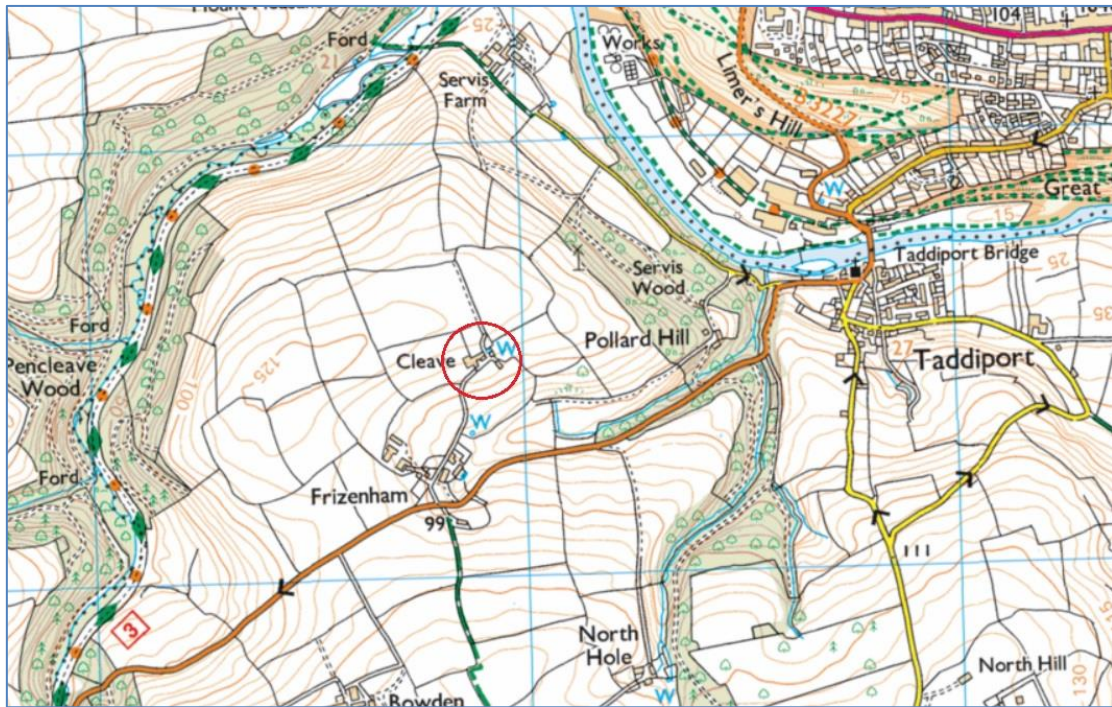


Fig 1 – OS Map of location (1:25 000)



Fig 2 – Aerial photograph showing surrounding land-use.



Fig 3 – Cleave Cottage (south elevations).



Fig 4 – Surveyed land parcel earmarked as the location of the new build.

3 Survey Methodology

3.1 Desk Study

A search of local records was made to identify any previous records of protected species in the area.

3.2 Nesting Birds

Cleave Cottage and its surrounding environs, were surveyed for Barn Owls, and nesting birds, using methodologies outlined by Natural England (2002) and the Barn Owl Trust (2012), and included looking for:

- Individuals, corpses, feathers, droppings and pellets
- Nests & potential nesting sites

3.3 Bats

The bat survey was conducted in accordance with guidelines given by Natural England and the Bat Conservation Trust in '*Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*' (Collins, 2016) and '*Bat Worker's Manual*' (Mitchell-Jones, 1999). The bat survey was carried out to determine presence/likely absence of bat species, and comprised a building inspection and one dusk emergence survey during optimum weather conditions at the peak of the bat activity season.

The building inspection included:

- an inspection (with a high powered torch where necessary) of the eaves, ridge beams and hips, and any other likely building habitat for bats; for signs of bats and individuals
- examination of walls and floors for droppings, dead individuals and skeletons
- a search for signs of bats including oily stains at entrance/exit holes, feeding remains, lack of cobwebs, characteristic smells and sounds
- an inspection of the surrounding area for suitable habitats.

The dusk emergence survey included:

- experienced surveyors watching from pre-determined strategic locations (opposing corners of the Building) for bats emerging from any potential access points
- the survey beginning 15 minutes before sunset and continuing for 90 minutes thereafter
- surveyors carrying hand-held bat detectors (Elekon Batscanner) and recording devices (Anabat Express) to capture any bat calls heard

3.4 Land

A walkover survey of the land earmarked for the erection of the new build (Fig 4) was made to determine the presence/likely absence of any protected species or species of ecological note.

4 Survey Results

4.1 Desk study

Barn Owls

Table 1: Records of Barn Owls within 10km

Location	Date	Distance	Recorder
Great Torrington	1968-1991	Within 10km	BTO* & BOT*

* British Trust for Ornithology

* Barn Owl Trust

Barn Owls (and other owl species) require mixed farmland with rough grazing, and habitat suitable for their food source, ie. small mammals. Barn Owls commonly nest in tall, mature trees and in the eaves of larger, older agricultural buildings (BOT, 2012).

A search of local records identified Barn Owls within 10km of the site, made by the British Trust for Ornithology and the Barn Owl Trust.

It is considered likely that the surrounding countryside provides suitable habitat for nesting and foraging Barn Owls.

Bats

The desk study identified the following records of Bats:

Table 2: Records of bats within 5km

Species	Location	Date	Distance	Recorder
Pipistrelle sp. (<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>)	Great Torrington	2016	<5km	*DBRC
Long-eared sp. (<i>Plecotus sp.</i>)	Taddiport	2005	<5km	*DBRC
Lesser Horseshoe (<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>)	Rosemoor	2005	<5km	*DBRC
Greater Horseshoe (<i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinem</i>)	Rosemoor	2005	<5km	*DBRC
Whiskered Brandts (<i>Myotis mystacinus/brandtii</i>)	Rosemoor	2004	<5km	*DBRC
Daubenton's (<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>)	River Torridge	2014	<5km	*DBRC

*Devon Biodiversity Records Centre (DBRC)

The Desk Study has identified six species of bats recorded within 5km of the site. It is considered likely that the surrounding countryside provides suitable habitat for foraging and roosting bats.

4.2 Site Survey

Cleave Cottage is a detached two-storey house of rendered block construction, with man-made roof tiles. The roof has two rendered chimney stacks with lead flashing at the base. There are wooden fascias, and barge boards. Modern additions to the building include a simple lean-to extension at the rear, and double-glazed uPVC doors and windows throughout (Fig 3). The building has many potential access points for bats underneath raised slates, timber fascias and ridge tiles. Sparrows are nesting in under lifted roof tiles at the eaves.

Due to the presence of habitat that might support roosting bats, a dusk emergence survey was undertaken. The results of the survey are summarised as follows:

Table 3: Results of Emergence Survey 3 July 2022

Date of Survey: 3/7/22			
Type of Survey: Sunset/Emergence			
Sunset Time: 2134			
Weather Conditions: 5% cloud cover. Still and dry			
Start Time: 2120		Finish Time: 2300	
Start Temp: 15°C		Finish Temp: 11°C	
Time	Species Recorded	Emerging?	Behaviour/Notes
2210	1 x Noctule	No	Commuting high overhead
2213	1 x Common Pipistrelle	No	Emerged from adjacent barn
2230	Distant Serotines	No	Foraging over surrounding habitat.

The land to the rear of the house where the new build will be located, forms part of a larger parcel of improved grassland (Fig 4). Supplementary feeding of cattle has been made in this location and the resulting botanical species are typical of disturbed and nutrient-enriched soil, including Nettles and Docks. It is considered the land is of low ecological value.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Bats

No evidence of roosting bats was identified. Many farm cats are present at Cleave Cottage, and during the dusk emergence survey one cat climbed onto the roof and into holes at slipped tiles! It is considered likely the presence of cats will negate suitability of the roof to support roosting bats.

It is considered bats are absent and shall not pose a constraint to the proposed works.

5.2 Nesting Birds

Sparrows are identified nesting in the roof eaves (also inspected by, but unobtainable to, the farm cats). The following is recommended:

- *Demolition works shall not commence during the bird nesting season which occurs between March and August.*

5.3 Land

The land is degraded and of low ecological value. The Local Planning Authority may wish to see a 10% gain in biodiversity following completion of the new build. It is considered that this gain will be achieved by the reversion of the existing house' footprint to garden or pasture.

6 References

Barn Owl Trust (2012). *Barn Owl Conservation Handbook*, Pelagic Publishing, Exeter.

Collins, J. (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines* 3rd Edition.

Mitchell-Jones, A J & McLeish, A P., (Edits) (1999). *The Bat Workers' Manual*. JNCC Peterborough.

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

This report has been produced in good faith, with all reasonable skill, care and diligence based on the information provided and accessible at the time of its preparation and within the scope of the work agreed with the client.

We disclaim any responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the scope of the above.

This report is provided for the sole use of the named client and is confidential to them and their professional advisors.