



Woodrising, Hillside Road, Bleadon

Bat & Bird Scoping Report

Prepared for: Dowlas Property Group Ltd

Date: October 2022



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Limitations

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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 October 2022 and is based on the conditions encountered and the information available during the said period of time.

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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 the remains of a residential property, namely 'Woodrising, Hillside Road, Bleadon, Weston-Super-Mare BS24 0AA' (Figure 1). The assessment was commissioned in relation to proposals to demolish the property, which was largely destroyed by fire in 2019. Once demolished, a replacement dwelling would be erected. As the works will be largely restricted to the footprint of the existing buildings and their immediate surrounds, 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 and the past five years. In both cases, the search was based on grid reference ST 3396 5763.

2.2 Field Survey

2.2.1 Preliminary Bat Appraisal

A Natural England (Class 2) licensed bat ecologist undertook a full inspection (external only) of Woodrising on 23rd September 2022. During the survey, the surveyor inspected the House and a Garage for exterior roosting locations and possible access points to each buildings' interior. Such features were accessed and inspected for signs of use using an endoscope.

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 (BCT, 2016). The BRP categories are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Bat Roost Potential Categories (BCT, 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 from 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

Roost Potential	Description
	bats.

2.2.1 Initial Bird Inspection

Concurrent with the bat inspection, the property was inspected for evidence of nesting birds (external only).

2.3 Survey Limitations

No internal survey of the House was carried out due to its unsafe structural condition. Most of the roof and all of the loft spaces had been destroyed by the fire. The remaining internal structure could be clearly observed from the outside using binoculars and a torch. As such, this constraint was not assessed to be significant.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Desk-based Study

A single statutory designated site was identified within 2 km, namely Purn Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Purn Hill SSSI was designated for its exceptionally diverse, unimproved calcareous grassland flora, which includes three nationally rare species. The SSSI also supports an important assemblage of butterflies. The SSSI was located c. 0.75 km to the west of Site at its nearest point. Given the highly localised nature of the works, there will be no direct impacts of the SSSI.

The Site is located within the Bat Consultation Zone (BCZ) for the North Somerset and Mendip Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The SAC is primarily designated for greater and lesser horseshoe bats, both of which are known to roost within caves in the Mendip Hills. The SAC comprises multiple discrete sites of which the nearest is located c. 4.4 km to the east. Woodrising lies within Band C of the BCZ. Accordingly, any plans submitted would need to be considered against the conservation goals of the adjacent SAC.

No historical EPSML were located within 1 km.

3.2 Site Context

Woodrising was located to the east of Hillside Road in Weston-Super-Mare. Further residential properties were located to the north, south and west of the property; woodland was located to the east. Hillside Road did not include any street lighting. Despite the property's proximity to Weston-Super-Mare, the local landscape was dominated by agricultural land.

3.3 Preliminary Bat Appraisal

3.3.1 House

Woodrising was largely destroyed by fire in November 2019 and has since stood derelict and unoccupied (Plates 1 - 3). The remains of the dormer bungalow were largely open to the elements. The external walls were intact and constructed from red brick, which was partly rendered. The doors and windows were also intact. Wooden soffit boxes were present at the walls tops. The soffit boxes were coming away from the wall in the east and included a damaged section in the west. Both areas were accessed using ladders and inspected using an endoscope; no signs of bats were recorded.

The central roof was largely destroyed although sections nearer the wall tops and a dormer window remained. These remaining sections were clad in double-roman tiles. The roof lining had been entirely destroyed by the fire.

Plate 1: North-eastern Aspect



Plate 2: South-western Aspect



Plate 3: Damaged Roof



Plate 4: Garage



The remaining structure did not include any loft voids or sheltered areas that weren't exposed to the elements. Overall, the House was assessed as having Negligible BRP.

3.3.2 Garage

A detached garage was located to the north of the structure (Plate 4). The walls of the garage were rendered externally. Well-fitting garage doors were located on the western aspect. The roof was flat and clad in bitumen felt. The garage did not include any external potential roost features nor any access to the building's interior. No signs of bats were recovered from within the building. Overall, the Garage was assessed as having Negligible BRP.

Birds

No signs of birds were noted in either building.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Bats

Woodrising (both House and Garage) was assessed as having Negligible BRP. Both buildings lacked external potential roost locations. Whilst access to the House's interior was readily available, the building did not include any sheltered areas that would afford protection from the elements. In contrast, the Garage did not include any suitable access points. As such, the proposed works will not adversely affect roosting bats and, as the works will be restricted to the existing footprints, there is no risk of habitat fragmentation. Bat roosts can be highly transient, moving location both within and between years. If no works have been undertaken within two years of this report, a resurvey is recommended.

Suitable bat foraging and commuting habitat was identified locally (i.e. woodland to the east). To prevent any indirect effects on this habitat, a sensitive lighting strategy will be implemented. The sensitive lighting strategy will comprise the following broad elements (BCT, 2018):

- No excessive lighting - use only the minimum amount required for safety;
- No night time working to be undertaken;
- 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 from within the new buildings by good design.

The property lacked suitable roosting opportunities for horseshoe bats and the associated garden was small and primarily laid to lawn. Given both the paucity of suitable habitat, the project will not affect horseshoe bats. As such, it can be robustly concluded there will be no 'Likely Significant Effect' on the North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC or any features thereof.

4.2 Birds

No signs of birds were recorded during the inspection and no further survey or mitigation has been recommended.

4.3 Opportunities for Enhancement

Two bird boxes could be added to the building or within the garden (i.e. on a tree / fence) as an enhancement. It is recommended that woodcrete boxes are used as these are long-lasting and often come with a 25-year guarantee. Bird boxes with a 32 mm entrance hole would be suitable and should be placed between 2 m and 4 m above ground level and not in direct sunlight. Bird boxes should not be positioned too close to each other to prevent aggressive behaviour. Further information is provided at www.rspb.org.uk.

Addition of one Schwegler (or equivalent) bat box on the property. It is recommended that a woodcrete box is utilised as these are long lasting and often come with a 25-year guarantee. The Schwegler 2FF

standard box (or equivalent) would be suitable for this purpose and is utilised by a wide range of bat species. The box should be oriented to the south in a dark location i.e. not subject to artificial lighting (as far as this is possible given the Site's location). Ideally, they should be placed over 4 m high (where safe installation is possible) and in an uncluttered location so that bats can easily fly in and out (www.bats.org.uk).

5 REFERENCES

- BCT (2016) Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition. BCT, London
- BCT (2018) Bats and Lighting. Bat Conservation Trust, London
- Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004) Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough