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# **Bat Assessment at The Old Stores, The Row, Hartest. Suffolk**

**On Behalf Of:**

**Mr & Mrs Crisp**

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## 0 SUMMARY

- 0.1 Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd. was commissioned by Mr & Mrs Crisp to undertake a bat assessment at The Old Stores, The Row, Hartest. Suffolk. The report is required for a planning application for a proposed single-storey extension and rooflights for an existing kitchen extension.
- 0.2 The survey was conducted on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023 by experienced ecologist Roger Spring BSC MCIEEM (bat survey licence number 2015-15553-CLS-CLS) and consisted of an internal and external inspection of the building, searching for potential for roosting and access for bats, as well as signs and evidence of bats. The assessment followed Natural England (English Nature) and Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) Guidelines. A local bat record search was obtained to support the assessment.
- 0.3 The site and proposed construction zone includes: a rendered brick, period property with existing extensions to the rear (eastern elevation). The existing roof was slate and pitched. No loft space is present. The land proposed for impact was found dominated by paving and short improved grassland. One early mature blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* will also require removal.
- 0.4 The site is positioned in a rural village location with residential housing north, south and west (across The Row). East of the site is a mature garden dominated by lawn, though with scattered mature trees and a stream on the far eastern boundary approximately 30m from the proposed extension.
- 0.5 No signs or evidence of bats or bat activity were found associated with the proposed construction zone. Opportunities for roosting were considered negligible with the roof tiles and soffits tightly fitting. A small number of broken tiles were noted, though all broken tiles still had pieces of tile attached to the roof wedged between tiles. Even where tiles were broken these areas were considered negligible in suitability or potential for roosting.
- 0.6 No old bird nests or bird activity were noted associated with the proposed construction zone, though theoretically the blackthorn tree was considered potentially suitable for low numbers of common nesting birds.
- 0.7 Overall, it was considered that the risk of significant impact or harm to bats, bat roosts or local bat conservation was negligible. Therefore, further bat surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary. However, standard precautionary measures for bats and nesting birds are included later in the report to minimise any residual risk of impact to bats.
- 0.8 With the recommendations followed as described, the proposed development could proceed with a minimal risk of harm or impact to bats.
- 0.9 Biodiversity enhancements are also included 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 & Mrs Crisp to undertake a bat assessment at The Old Stores, The Row, Hartest, Suffolk. The report is required for a planning application for a proposed single-storey extension and rooflights for an existing kitchen extension.
- 1.1.2 Bats are protected by law and some bat species, such as brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus* bat are also UK priority species. Protected and priority species are a material consideration for individual planning decisions under the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) (MHCLG, 2021).
- 1.1.3 CIEEM guidelines indicate that ecological surveying typically remains valid for between 12 and 18 months.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Desk Study**

- 2.1.1 Local bat records were obtained through the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS) to support the assessment.
- 2.1.2 These results were then combined with the findings of the site survey, to assess the risk of ecology issues, relevant to planning, occurring on the site.

### **2.2 Study Limitations**

- 2.2.1 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 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023 by experienced ecologist Roger Spring BSC MCIEEM (bat survey licence number: 2015-15553-CLS-CLS) 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 a ladder, high powered torch, digital camera, binoculars and a 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 birds 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 Internal surveying was not considered necessary due to the lack of loft space.

### 3 RESULTS AND RISK

#### 3.1 Site Description & Location

- 3.1.1 The site and proposed construction zone includes: a rendered brick, period property with existing extensions to the rear (eastern elevation). The existing roof was slate and pitched. No loft space is present. The land proposed for impact was found dominated by paved garden and short improved grassland. One early mature blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* will also require removal.
- 3.1.2 The site is positioned in a rural village location with residential housing north, south and west (across The Row). East of the site is a mature garden dominated by lawn, though with scattered mature trees and a stream on the far eastern boundary approximately 30m from the proposed extension.

#### 3.2 Data Search

- 3.2.1 The following information is a list of local bat records collated through the SBIS.

**Table 1 - Summary of local bat records.**

Species	Location	Year
Brown long eared	980m north	2003
Common pipistrelle	740m south west	2003
Soprano pipistrelle	Hartest Church	2013
Serotine	Hartest Church	2013
Natterers	740m south west	2003

### **3.3 Bats**

#### *Building Suitability for Bats*

- 3.3.1 No signs or evidence of bats or bat activity were found associated with the proposed construction zone. Opportunities for roosting were considered negligible with the roof tiles and soffits tightly fitting. A small number of broken tiles were noted, though all broken tiles still had pieces of tile attached to the roof wedged between tiles. Even where tiles were broken these areas were considered negligible in suitability or potential for roosting.

#### *Other Protected & Priority Species*

- 3.3.2 No old bird nests or bird activity were noted associated with the proposed construction zone, though theoretically the blackthorn tree was considered potentially suitable for low numbers of common nesting birds.

## **4 DISCUSSION OF RISK AND LEGISLATION**

### **4.1 Protected 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 Several bat species have been recorded locally (SBIS, 2022). However, the proposed construction zone was considered negligible in suitability or potential for foraging or roosting bats. The proposed construction zone offered negligible opportunities for roosting. This combined with the lack of signs or evidence of bat activity found meant the risk of presence or significant impact to roosting bats was considered negligible.

- 4.1.3 Therefore, further bat surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary.

- 4.1.4 However, to minimise any residual risk of impact to bats, impact avoidance

precautionary measures, detailed below, should be followed.

#### *Other Notable Species*

- 4.1.5 No other evidence of notable species or activity by notable wildlife (such as bird nests etc.) were found. However, the blackthorn tree was considered suitable for low numbers of nesting birds. Therefore, to prevent harm to actively nesting birds, recommendations detailed later in the report, should be followed.

## **5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Precautionary Measures**

#### *Bats*

- 5.1.1 The proposed construction zone was considered unlikely to support roosting bats and the proposed development unlikely to significantly impact upon bats. However, to minimise any residual risk of impact to bats, the following precautionary measures should be undertaken:

- If at any point during construction, bats or evidence of bat activity (droppings etc.) are found, works should stop and an Ecologist called for advice.
- If future external lighting is installed, it should be warm white LED, directed downward and ideally set on sensors sensitive to large moving objects only to prevent passing bats from switching the lights on.

#### *Birds*

- 5.1.2 It is recommended that to prevent harm to nesting birds, removal of the blackthorn tree should commence outside of the main bird breeding season (March until the end of August). If this timescale is not possible then an it should be thoroughly inspected for active bird nests before removal.
- 5.1.3 If an active bird nest was found, it would be necessary to protect the nest from harm or disturbance until the bird had finished nesting.

### **5.2 Enhancements**

- 5.2.1 By undertaking the following recommended biodiversity enhancements, the site will be improved for local wildlife and provide a net-gain in accordance with national planning policy (NPPF, 2021).

5.2.2 The following will increase the potential bird nesting/roosting opportunities on the site and enhance the ecological value of the site for local wildlife:

- 1 x Barn Owl Box.

5.2.3 It is understood from the applicant that barn owls are present using adjacent fields and it was considered possible that the barn owls would use a box if appropriately positioned on a boundary mature tree close to the stream on the eastern boundary facing out over adjacent fields. The box will need to be positioned high on the tree (above 5m) to ensure it is high enough to avoid obstruction from shrubs along the stream.

5.2.4 Any new soft landscaping will be native and/or wildlife attracting.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

6.1 Signs or evidence of roosting bats were not identified. The risk of presence and impact to roosting bats was considered negligible. Further bat surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary.

6.2 With the precautionary measures for bats and birds followed as described, it was considered that the proposed development could proceed with a minimal risk of harm or impact to bats, bat roosts/nesting birds, or to local bat and bird conservation.

6.3 By following the biodiversity enhancements, the ecological value of the site would be increased for the benefit of local wildlife in accordance with national planning policy.

## **7 REFERENCES**

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

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## 8 APPENDICES

### 8.1 Appendix 1: Figures

Figure 1: Location Plan.



## 8.2 Appendix 2: Photographs

**Photograph 1: Elevation proposed for an extension and roof lights at The Old Stores.**



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023

**Photograph 2: Close up of the area proposed for a new single-story extension attached to the existing extension at The Old Stores.**



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023

**Photograph 3: Existing kitchen proposed for roof lights at The Old Stores.**



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023

**Photograph 4: Close up of roof of The Old Stores.**



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023

**Photograph 5: Close up of the eaves at The Old Stores.**



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023