



HYBRID ECOLOGY LTD
joined up thinking

Preliminary Roost Assessment:
The Old School House, Ashbocking, Suffolk

On behalf of:
Mr and Mrs R Webber

Prepared by:
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Summary

The Old School House, Ashbocking, Suffolk (the site) was visited on 9th June 2023 in response to a proposal for demolition of a rear extension and construction of a replacement on a similar footprint.

This report provides the results of a Preliminary Roost Assessment and makes recommendations for further detailed surveys, mitigation and enhancement measures in the context of the proposal, referring to planning policy and best practice guidance, where appropriate.

In accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's Good Practice Guidelines (BCT, 2016), the survey involved external and internal inspections of the house (focusing on the proposed area of works) to identify evidence of, or potential for roosting bats. Bats are legally protected from killing, injury, disturbance, roost obstruction and roost destruction. Surveys are therefore required to establish any bat roosts and identify mitigation necessary to enable development to proceed lawfully.

Findings and recommendations

The rear extension proposed for demolition is well-sealed with no observable crevices and no internal loft void. The main house has potential for crevice dwelling bats under roof tiles, but all are well away from the area of works and will be completely unaffected.

Despite a thorough inspection, no bat evidence (e.g. droppings) was identified around the proposed area of works. The extension/area of proposed works has negligible roost suitability (BCT, 2016). As there is no risk of killing, injuring bats or disturbing/destroying a roost, further surveys are not necessary and there is no requirement for a mitigation licence from Natural England. Should work be proposed on the roof of the main house, further bat surveys would be warranted.

In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during demolition, work will cease until ecological advice has been sought. As a precautionary measure, we recommend slate roof tiles are removed from the top down and carefully checked before being discarded/stored. Where possible, demolition should take place in September/October when the risk of wildlife, including nesting birds is greatly reduced.

To enhance the site for bats, at least one bat roost feature should be included on the site, ideally a bat box on a mature tree in the garden. This would contribute to Government aims under Paragraph 174(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 and Local Plan policies which encourage all development to demonstrate biodiversity net-gain.

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1.0 Introduction

Personnel

1.1 This report has been prepared by Gemma Holmes, Consultant Ecologist at Hybrid Ecology Ltd. Gemma is a qualified ecologist with 16 years' experience in professional survey work and is an Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Gemma holds a level 2 licence to survey bats in the UK (Licence number 2016-27305-CLS-CLS).

Purpose/context

1.2 Hybrid Ecology Ltd. was instructed by Mr. and Mrs. Webber to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment at The Old School House, Ashbocking (grid reference TM 16983 54882) in relation to a proposal for demolition of the rear aspect and construction of a replacement extension. The subject building/survey boundary is identified in Figure 1 and a Location Plan showing the site context is in Figure 2. This report has been written to support a planning application.

1.3 Bats (all UK species) are legally protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2019, EU Exit) and Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended) from killing, injury, disturbance, roost destruction and roost obstruction. Building work can result in the destruction of/disturbance to bat roosts and trigger offences under the above legislation, in the absence of appropriate controls.

1.4 Several UK bat species are also listed on Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) as Priority Species, meaning Local Planning Authorities have a duty to "conserve and protect" in their decision making, including the determination of planning applications.

1.5 The purpose of the survey was:

- a) To identify bat roost field signs and potential access points on the subject building such that further surveys can be advised, or bats can be confidently scoped out as appropriate;
- and
- b) To provide mitigation recommendations to ensure that the development will be carried out in accordance with wildlife legislation.

Limitations

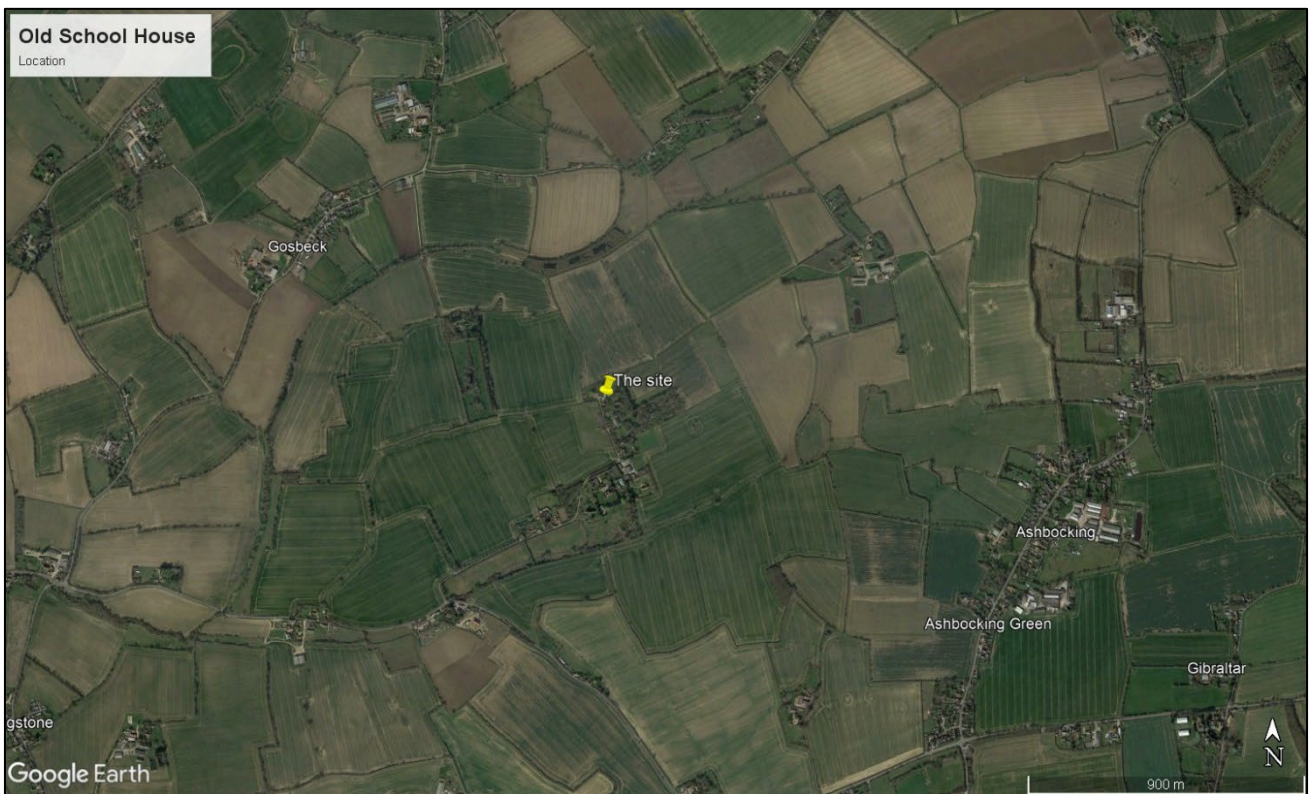
1.6 There were no limitations to the survey that would materially impact the findings and/or recommendations.

1.7 As bats are transient and highly mobile, this report is valid until June 2024, beyond which the habitats may have changed to warrant an updated survey.

Figure 1. Subject building/survey boundary showing proposed area of works



Figure 2. Site location



2.0 Planning Policy and Legislation

National Planning Policy Framework (2021) Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Note the following text has been taken directly from the National Planning Policy Framework.

Relevant policies

Paragraph 174 (d):

- Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

Paragraph 180 (d):

- Development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Legislation

Please refer to wildlife legislation here - [Environmental management : Wildlife and habitat conservation - detailed information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). The text below is a summary only and is not an interpretation of any law.

2.1 In the UK, all bat species and their roosts are legally protected, by both domestic and international legislation. This means you may be committing a criminal offence if you:

- Deliberately take, injure or kill a wild bat
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or deliberately disturb a group of bats
- Damage or destroy a place used by bats for breeding or resting (roosts) (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time)
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost

2.2 A European Protected Species (EPS) licence can be issued by Natural England for scientific and research purposes (including survey work). An EPS licence can also be issued by Natural England for the disturbance of an EPS in relation to a development.

2.3 Licences can only be granted if there is no satisfactory alternative or if the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a Favourable Conservation Status in their natural range and can only be obtained once planning permission has been granted.

3.0 Methodology

Desktop study

- 3.1 The immediate landscape was assessed via aerial mapping (Google Earth Pro, 2020) for any significant bat-roosting and foraging habitats (woodland, water etc.) connecting to the site.
- 3.2 Multi-agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) was used to identify any European Protected Species (EPS) licences that have been granted for bats within a 5km radius of the site.

Field survey: Preliminary Roost Assessment

- 3.3 The site was visited on 9th June 2023 by Gemma Holmes, during which the building identified in Figure 1 was subject to an internal and external inspection. In accordance with BCT, 2016, a systematic search was made to identify potential or actual bat access points and roosting places. Nature Hawke binoculars were used to carefully check the roof, cladding and walls for any defects creating access opportunities. The search included the ground, particularly beneath potential access points, where accessible. A systematic search was also made of the interior to identify potential bat access points and roosting places and to locate evidence of bats, including droppings and feeding remains. Accessible/ground-level crevices were inspected with a Clu-lite torch. The building was assigned a “bat roost suitability” based on features/evidence found, in accordance with Table 1.
- 3.4 Where appropriate, notes were also made on habitats surrounding the house.

Table 1. Guidelines for assessing potential suitability of development sites for bats (BCT, 2016)

Table 4.1 Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats, based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, to be applied using professional judgement.		
Suitability	Description Roosting habitats	Commuting and foraging habitats
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats.
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 ^a 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 ^b). 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. ^c	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
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 ^a 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).	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
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 ^a and surrounding habitat.	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

4.0 Results

Desktop study

- 4.1 Please refer to Figure 2. The site is situated at the northern extent of Ashbocking, in a rural location. The surrounding landscape is predominantly arable. There is a mature garden and small wooded area extending to the north and east of the property. The landscape shows “moderate” suitability for foraging/commuting bats, defined by BCT as – *“continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub and linked back gardens.”*
- 4.2 There are no granted EPS licences for bats within 2km.

Field survey: Preliminary Roost Assessment

Photographs are provided in Figure 3.

- 4.3 The main house has brick walls and is two-storeys with a pitched, tiled roof aligned north/south. There are 4 large brick chimneys. There are minor crevices under roof tiles on the eastern and western aspects of the roof, although the main roof will be completely untouched. Internally, the ceiling is vaulted and the rooms are open to the ridge, there is no enclosed loft void.
- 4.4 The modern rear extension projects to the east and is proposed for demolition/replacement. It is single-storey and split into several rooms, storage, bathroom, kitchen and a small log store/lean to on the northern end. The log store is an open building with tin roof, otherwise the remainder of the building is a mix of boarded or brick walls and an asymmetric slate tiled roof. All rooms were inspected internally, there is no loft void above. Roof tiles are generally in good condition throughout, none were noted as slipped or missing and they are tightly sealed. The large brick chimney breast on the southern aspect is well-sealed with intact lead flashing (note no chimney stacks will be affected). Several tiles above the kitchen, facing north are covered with moss. No bat droppings were identified externally on roof tiles, nor on walls, around window frames or the floor.
- 4.5 Since there is no potential for/evidence of roosting bats around the extension, there is a negligible risk of an offence being committed during the works – which are restricted to demolition of the single-storey structure and construction of a replacement on a very similar footprint. Consequently, the area of works is assigned negligible bat roost suitability (BCT, 2016) and there is no reason to carry out further survey. Should the scope of works extend beyond the extension to the house in the future, further bat surveys would be warranted.

Other identified habitats/species constraints

- 4.6 The house is surrounded by a well-maintained garden, there is a semi-mature walnut tree to the north, and several oak and silver birch trees to the east/south-east. There is a native hedgerow extending to the east from the kitchen. We understand all surrounding vegetation will be retained and protected throughout works. Heras fencing is recommended around at least the “drip line” of tree canopies to ensure direct damage is avoided. Parking/storage of materials within Root Protection Areas should be avoided.

4.7 There are bird boxes installed around the kitchen, facing north and east. Active nests are legally protected. It is recommended that bird boxes are removed between September – February inclusive or when it is clear to the occupants that any young have fledged.

Figure 3. Photographs



a) Extension, to be demolished and replaced.



b) Northern end of extension – log store.



c) Store and utility room.



d) Vaulted ceiling inside the main house.



e) Walnut tree to the north, to be retained and protected.



f) Bird boxes on the kitchen, to be removed outside nesting season.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 On 9th June 2023, Hybrid Ecology Ltd. conducted a Preliminary Roost Assessment at the Old School House, Ashbocking in relation to a planning application for a new extension. The survey was carried out by Gemma Holmes, who holds a level 2 licence to survey for bats. The survey included a thorough internal and external inspection in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust 2016 Guidelines.
- 5.2 The area of works lacks suitable voids/crevices and therefore has negligible roosting opportunities. No field evidence indicating bat presence was seen internally or externally. This assessment therefore concludes likely absence. As there is no risk of an offence being committed under wildlife legislation, there is no requirement for further survey or a mitigation licence from Natural England.
- 5.3 As a precautionary measure, it is recommended that slate roof tiles are removed carefully from the top down and carefully checked before being discarded/stored for re-use. Ideally, works will take place in September/October when the risk of encountering wildlife, including nesting birds is greatly reduced.
- 5.4 In the unlikely event that bats are encountered at any point, work will immediately cease until ecological advice has been sought and implemented.
- 5.5 It is recommended that at least one bat roost feature/box is installed on site, ideally on a retained mature tree. Bat boxes should be installed above 3 metres and face south, south-east or south-west for maximum chance of occupation. Bat boxes could also be integrated into the walls of the new extension, or externally mounted. See Appendix 1 for recommendations.
- 5.6 Provided the advice in this report is followed, there is no reason the work will materially impact bats nor affect Favourable Conservation Status of bats in their natural range.

References

BCT, 2018. Bats and Artificial Lighting <https://www.bats.org.uk/news/2018/09/new-guidance-on-bats-and-lighting>

BCT, 2016. Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London. http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/batsurveyguide.html?sm_au=ijVSrSjrZMIR1Psj

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, 2019. Available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/490/pdfs/uksi_20100490_en.pdf

HM Government, 2021. National Planning Policy Framework. London: Department for Communities and Local Government. Available at: <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/policy/>

Multi-agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) Interactive Map. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

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

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC Act), 2006, as amended. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>

Appendix 1. Recommended bat boxes



Beaumaris bat box for gable ends [Beaumaris WoodStone Bat Box Midi | Vivara](#)



Integrated Eco Bat Box – [Integrated Eco Bat Box | NHBS Practical Conservation Equipment](#)

SINGLE CREVICE BAT BOX

TWO CREVICE BAT BOX



£36

£48

Individually Handmade - Specifications are in CM and approximate.

External: 43 high x 21.5 wide x 6.8 deep.

Internal: 41 x 16.5 x 1.8 crevices @ 1.

Made with small groups of crevice dwelling bat species in mind, such as pipistrelles. Approx. 4.75kg

Individually Handmade - Specifications are in CM and approximate.

External: 43 high x 21.5 wide x 6.8 deep.

Internal: 41 x 16.5 x 1.8 crevices @ 2.

Made with small groups of crevice dwelling bat species in mind, such as pipistrelles. Approx. 6.75kg

Bat boxes for trees [Home | Greenwood's Ecohabitats \(greenwoodsecohabitats.co.uk\)](#)