



Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd.

The Cherries, Ashen Road,

Clare, Suffolk, CO10 8LG

T: 01787277912

E: roger@skilledecology.co.uk

W: www.skilledecology.co.uk

Bat Assessment at Curates House, The Green, Hartest, Suffolk. IP29 4DH

On Behalf Of:

Mr & Mrs Pask

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Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd.

Registered company in England no: 7188811

Registered Office: Alpha 6, Masterlord Office Village, West Road, Ransomes Europark, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP3 9SX.

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0 SUMMARY

- 0.1 Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd. was commissioned by Mr & Mrs Pask to undertake a bat assessment at Curates House, The Green, Hartest, Suffolk. IP29 4DH. The report is required for a planning application for three new dormer windows on the eastern (front) elevation.
- 0.2 The survey was conducted on the 23rd June 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 three-storey, period dwelling with a pitched (Dutch-style), slate tiled roof. A small loft space is present, though reduced due to the second floor. Thick insulation was present in the loft blocking the soffits.
- 0.4 The site is positioned in a rural village location on the green in Hartest with residential housing north, south and west with the green present east of the site.
- 0.5 No signs or evidence of bats or bat activity were found in the loft or externally associated with the proposed construction zone. Opportunities for roosting were considered negligible with the roof tiles and soffits tightly fitting. Gutter guards were present blocking access for bats or birds under the first row of tiles.
- 0.6 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 are included later in the report to minimise any residual risk of impact to bats.
- 0.7 With the recommendations followed as described, the proposed development could proceed with a minimal risk of harm or impact to bats.
- 0.8 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 Pask to undertake a bat assessment at Curates House, The Green, Hartest, Suffolk. IP29 4DH. The report is required for a planning application for three new dormer windows on the eastern (front) elevation.
- 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 23rd June 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 and inside 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).

3 RESULTS AND RISK

3.1 Site Description & Location

- 3.1.1 The site and proposed construction zone includes: a three-storey, period dwelling with a pitched (Dutch-style), slate tiled roof. A small loft space is present, though reduced due to the second floor. Thick insulation was present in the loft blocking the soffits.
- 3.1.2 The site is positioned in a rural village location on the green in Hartest with residential housing north, south and west with the green present east of the site.

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	680m north	2003
Common pipistrelle	1km south west	2003
Soprano pipistrelle	Hartest Church	2013
Serotine	Hartest Church	2013
Natterers	1km south west	2003

3.3 Bats

Building Suitability for Bats

- 3.3.1 No signs or evidence of bats or bat activity were found in the loft or associated with the proposed construction zone. Opportunities for roosting on the eastern elevation where the dormer windows are proposed were considered negligible with the roof tiles and soffits tightly fitting.

Other Protected & Priority Species

- 3.3.2 No old bird nests or bird activity were noted associated with the proposed construction zone. Opportunities for nesting birds were restricted due to the gutter guard.

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. Potential for such was considered negligible.

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:

- Roof tiles should be removed by hand during works. 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.

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 Schwegler 1FD Bat Box (or similar).

- 5.2.3 The bat box should be installed high (above 4m) on an adjacent mature tree. The box should be installed facing a southerly direction.

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 followed as described, it was considered that the proposed development could proceed with a minimal risk of harm or impact to bats, bat roosts, or to local bat 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

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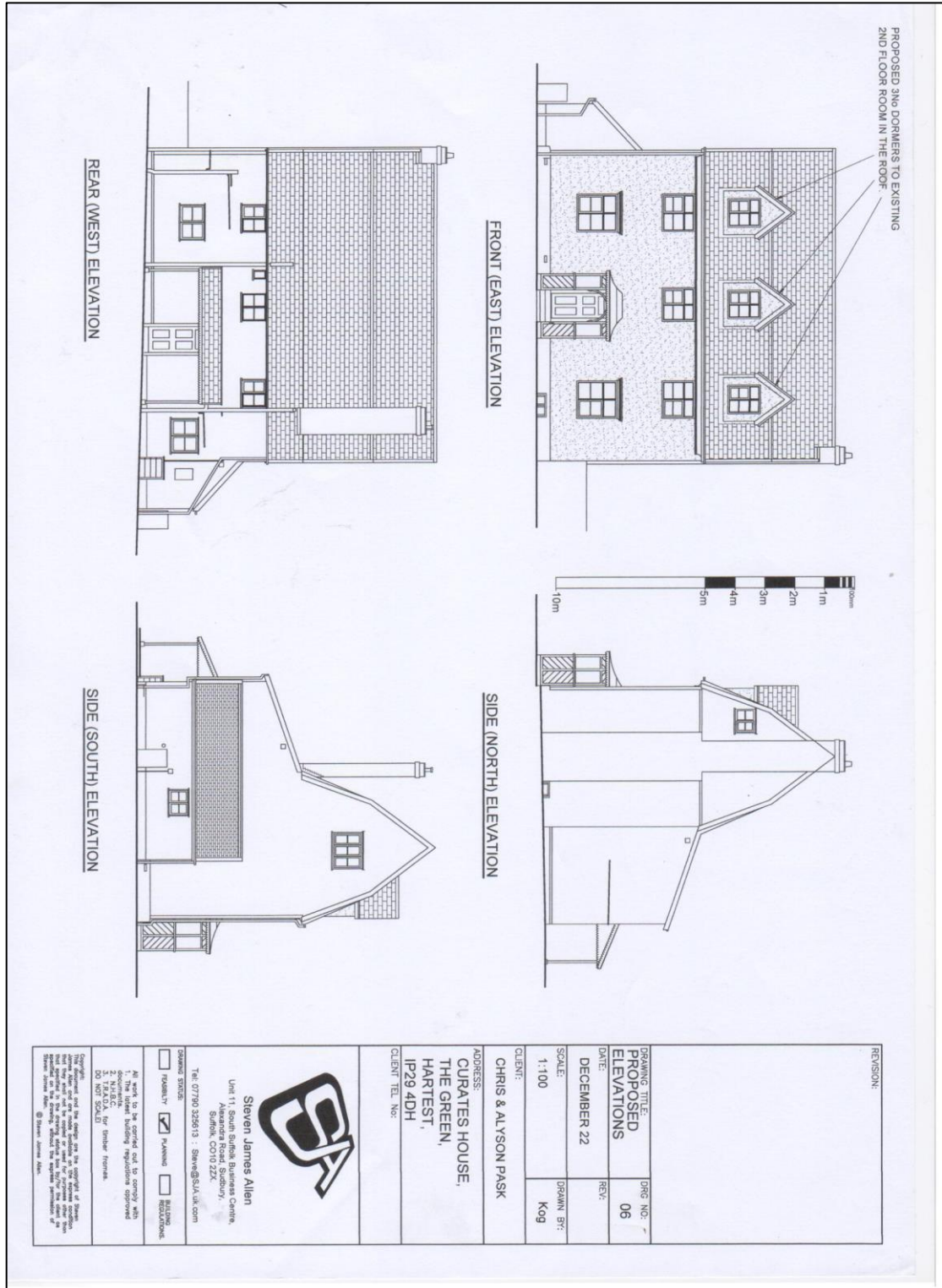
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8 APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix 1: Figures

Figure 1: Proposed development.



8.2 Appendix 2: Photographs

Photograph 1: Eastern elevation proposed for the new dormer windows at Curates House.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023

Photograph 2: Close up of the eastern elevation at Curates House.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023

Photograph 3: Inside the loft at Curates House.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023