



# Preliminary bat roost assessment.

**Site location:**  
The Gables Centre, Gables Road, Willand, Devon, EX15 2PL

**Client:**  
Willand Pre-School

**Report date:**  
06/08/2023

**Report version:**  
1.1 – Final

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## Devon County Council: Devon Wildlife Checklist (for front of Wildlife Report.)

### A.1 Protected and priority species (relates to question 13a in the planning application form).

A tick or cross must be placed in all boxes in column two (shaded) and then, where there is a tick, all other boxes in that row. Where species are present please email this form to Devon Biodiversity Records Centre - [DBRC@dbrc.org.uk](mailto:DBRC@dbrc.org.uk).

**Location:**  
The Gables Centre, Gables Road, Willand, EX15 2PL

**Grid reference for centre of site (6 digit):**  
ST 034 108

**Planning Reference:**  
TBC

**Name of surveyor and consultancy:**  
Alastair Blake: Blake Ecology

**Date that surveys carried out:**  
PRA: 21-07-2023

**Sent to DBRC: Y / N**  
N/A

Species - terrestrial, intertidal, marine	Walkover shows that suitable habitat present and reasonably likely that the species will be found? <u>Tick or cross</u>	Detailed survey needed to clarify impacts and mitigation requirements?	Detailed survey carried out and included ?	Species Present or Assumed to be present on site <u>Indicate with P or A and name the species</u>	Impact on species?	Detailed Conservation Action Statement included?  Sets out actions needed in relation to avoidance / mitigation / compensation / enhancement	EPS offence committed? Three tests met?	Grid reference for specific location of species (if required for large sites)
Bats (roost)	Y	N	N	A - Common bats possible outside of development footprint	N	N/A	N	N/A
Bats (flight line / foraging habitat)	N							
Dormice	N							
Otters	N							
Great crested newts (*check consultation zone)	N							
Cirl buntings (*check consultation zone)	N							
Barn owls	N							

<b>Other Schedule 1 birds</b>	N							
<b>Breeding birds</b>	N							
<b>Reptiles</b>	N							
<b>Native crayfish</b>	N							
<b>Water voles</b>	N							
<b>Badgers</b>	N							
<b>Other protected species</b>	N							
<b>UK BAP priority species</b>	N							
<b>Devon BAP key species</b>	N							
<b>Invasive species</b>	N							

Devon consultation zones for cirl buntings and great crested newts - <http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/wildlife.htm>

UK BAP priority species - <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5717>

Devon BAP key species - [http://www.devon.gov.uk/dbap-section\\_e.pdf](http://www.devon.gov.uk/dbap-section_e.pdf) (note that this list is currently being updated)

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## Executive Summary

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Blake Ecology undertook a Preliminary Roost Assessment at The Gables, Willand on the 21<sup>st</sup> July 2023. It is proposed that a single storey glass roof will be constructed over the existing courtyard on site, requiring some changes to an existing single-storey roof.

No signs of bats were found during the assessment. Only features of a negligible suitability for bats were found within the direct footprints of the proposal. Whilst a number of low suitability features were noted around the roof structures of the double-storey elevations on site, these are untouched by proposals, and sufficiently distant to be unaffected by disturbance.

The overall building was therefore assessed as having a “low” suitability for roosting bats (under the Collins, 2016 criteria), with only a negligible likelihood of impacts in the context of proposals.

No further surveys or avoidance actions are required.

Table 1: Summary of results

Initial (phase 1) survey - Preliminary Roost Assessment;			
Date	Building reference	Initial likelihood of bat presence (under Collins 2016 criteria)	Recommendations for further survey/assessment (Collins 2016 criteria)
21/07/2021	B1 (Nursery/meeting rooms)	Low	<p>Suitability for roosting bats is limited to low suitability features located away from proposed works. Only features with a negligible suitability for bats are present within the direct footprint of the proposal.</p> <p>No significant impacts are anticipated to bats (should these be present) in the context of the proposals.</p> <p>Therefore no further surveys or actions are required, however biodiversity enhancements could be considered.</p>

## 1 Introduction and Context

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### 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Blake Ecology were commissioned to undertake a daytime Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) at The Gables Centre, Willand, EX15 2PL.
- 1.1.2 No recent ecological assessments are understood to have been undertaken at the site.

### 1.2 Site Context

- 1.2.1.1 The site is located at National Grid Reference ST 034 108 and comprises of a detached building, used for a nursery and other purposes.
- 1.2.1.2 The site is situated within the village of Willand, Devon. The immediate vicinity is dominated by residential houses and gardens. Open countryside with pastoral/arable fields, hedgerows and treelines is present from ~200m south.

### 1.3 Proposed development

- 1.3.1.1 This report is prepared to accompany a planning application to Mid-Devon District Council. A single storey glass roof will be constructed over the courtyard on site. This will involve alterations to the roof of the existing single storey elevation. The roof structures of the existing double storey elevations are to remain unchanged, with the new roof adjoining external walls at a single storey height.
- 1.3.1.2 Plans showing proposed works are detailed in Appendix 2.

### 1.4 Purpose and scope of the survey

- 1.4.1.1 The purpose of the survey was to;

Assess the suitability of the structure(s) to support roosting bats.

Identify potential impacts on bats (should these be present) as a consequence of the proposals.

Assess the need for further surveys, or avoidance actions should there be potential for bats to be impacted by proposals.

1.5 Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

1.5.1.1 The assessments carried out (and any subsequent recommendations) are based upon the 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition' (Collins 2016). This provides the national standard applied by ecologists and planners for assessing bat roosts.

1.5.1.2 The Good Practice Guidelines provides a methodology and scoring system for assessing the likelihood of structures to support roosting bats (with scores ranging from 'Negligible' to 'Low', and through to 'High' and 'Confirmed Roost'). The initial assessment is based upon the suitability of features present for roosting bats, along with the quality of surrounding habitats. Where suitability exists (and bats potentially impacted if present) bat emergence/activity surveys are recommended to show presence/likely absence, and if present characterise how bats use the roost. Survey efforts are based on the initial suitability score.

1.5.1.3 Signs of bat use (such as droppings, scuff marks and prey remains) are also searched for during the building survey, and form a part of the assessment. However the overall assessment is not limited to such signs. Most bat species prefer to roost within tight gaps and crevices (often deep into a structure), from which signs of their presence are not always visible. Conversely, where bat droppings are found, these do not necessarily conclude that bats are roosting within a structure (when signs can also be left by exploring or foraging bats in some instances). Hence both the guidelines and this preliminary roost assessment are primarily based upon the suitability of features present for roosting bats (unless their use can be ruled out).

1.6 Planning considerations towards protected species and wider biodiversity.  
Protected species



- 1.6.1.1 Protected species (including bats) are a material consideration which planning authorities are required to consider within applications. As per the ODPM Circular 06/2005, “the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat.” Therefore “it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision.”

## 2 Methodology

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### 2.1 Preliminary Roost Assessment

- 2.1.1.1 The preliminary roost assessment encompassed both a desk study to gauge the likely use of local habitats by bats, as well as a daytime building inspection to assess the suitability of the survey building(s) to support roosting bats. The methodologies employed for each are as detailed below;

### 2.2 Desk Study

- 2.2.1.1 A desk study was conducted to gauge the likely value of surrounding habitats for bats, as well as highlight any off-site features that may be of particular relevance to the proposal. This consisted of;

A review of Google satellite imagery along with priority habitat information available through the MAGIC website: so as to gauge the likely value of the wider area for bats, and highlight any features (e.g. habitat corridors or priority habitats) that may be of particular relevance.

A review of any designated sites present locally, as recorded on the MAGIC website

A review of granted European Protected Species Licenses (for bats) recorded locally within the MAGIC website.

2.2.1.2 Due to the small scale of the proposal, the scope for off-site impacts is very limited. Therefore the on-site survey and desk study conducted were considered sufficient to identify any likely impacts to bats from the proposal. An additional data request to the local biological records centre was not considered necessary in this instance.

### 2.3 Daytime Building Inspection

2.3.1.1 The building survey was undertaken by Alastair Blake, MSc, BA (Hons), BSdip, MRSB on the 21<sup>st</sup> July 2023. Alastair is a licensed ecologist with over 10 years' experience working with bats. Bat license number: 2015-15688-CLS-CLS.

2.3.1.2 During the survey a thorough visual inspection was undertaken using a high powered torch, binoculars, ladder and an endoscope (as required). Both signs of bat use (e.g. droppings, insect remains, scuff marks, and live individuals) and features suitable for roosting animals were searched for, recorded and assessed. Particular attention was given to those features suitable for bats to access or roost around the building (such as spaces at external wall-tops, slipped/raised tiles, and timbers within roof spaces). Further attention was given to searching for any signs of use, particularly around potential roost/entry features, as well as along flat surfaces, on walls and within cobwebs.

### 2.4 Breeding birds and other incidental observations

2.4.1.1 Notes were also made of any incidental observations of other species (such as breeding birds) that may require consideration under the proposal.

### 2.5 Suitability Assessment

2.5.1.1 The building(s) was assigned an overall grade of the likeliness of bat presence, in line with the Good Practice Guidelines (Collins 2016). Grades range from “negligible” (buildings with little or no suitability), and “low” (those buildings with suitability confined to individual bats of widespread species) through to “high” (buildings with suitability for higher numbers of bats of multiple species and/or roosts of a higher conservation value) or “confirmed” (buildings known to be used by roosting bats).

## 2.6 Constraints

2.6.1.1 No site specific limitations were recorded during the surveys, with full access afforded and the surveys conducted in appropriate weather conditions.

## 3 Results

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### 3.1 Desk Study

#### Habitats and surroundings

- 3.1.1.1 The site is located within the village of Willand, Devon.
- 3.1.1.2 Google satellite imagery shows the immediate area around the site to be dominated by residential houses and gardens. Occasional green spaces (such as playing fields) are also present, as are occasional lines of trees. The M5 motorway dissects the landscape from north to south ~250m to the west of the site. Open countryside is located from ~200m (south) from the site at it's closest point. This is mainly dominated by pastoral and arable fields, surrounded by hedgerows and tree lines. The River Culm is ~1km to the east. According to the MAGIC website a strip of deciduous woodland is present ~200m south of the site, as well as strips of coastal/floodplain grazing marsh ~700m south-east and north-west.
- 3.1.1.3 The most suitable habitats for bats locally are those found within the open countryside (particularly hedgerows, treelines and waterways), although trees and residential gardens in the immediate area may still offer some opportunities for widespread bat species to forage. Connectivity between the site and open countryside is available, but fragmented, and likely to restrict those more light adverse bat species.



**Figure 1: Satellite image showing local landscape structure.**

Designated sites

- 3.1.1.4 According to the MAGIC website, no statutory designated sites occur within 1km of the site. Neither does the site fall within the impact risk zone of any statutory sites occurring further afield that have been designated for bats.

European Protected Species Mitigation Licences

- 3.1.1.5 According to the MAGIC website, one granted European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (referring to bats) is noted within 1km of the site. This is ~470m to the south, and is a license to damage a breeding site and destroy resting places used by common pipistrelle, brown long-eared and whiskered bats.

4 Daytime Building Assessment

4.1 Weather conditions

- 4.1.1.1 The weather conditions during the survey were as detailed in the table below.

Table 2: Weather conditions during survey.					
Date	Temperature	Humidity	Cloud Cover	Wind	Precipitation
21/07/2023	20°C	26%	90%	1	Dry

4.2 Building description: Nursery/meeting rooms (B1)

[General.](#)

- 4.2.1.1 The overall survey building forms a horseshoe shape surrounding a hard standing ‘courtyard’. Two tall double storey elevations are present, connected at the rear by a single storey structure.

- 4.2.1.2 Proposals are limited to the construction of a glass roof within the footprint of the courtyard and a part of the existing single storey structure. This would adjoin the external walls of the double storey structures at a single storey level, with walls and roofs above this level remaining untouched.

[Single storey structure](#)

4.2.1.3 The single storey elevation is constructed with rendered walls and a single pitched clay-tiled roof. A loft space runs through the entirety of this roof.

4.2.1.4 Externally, the wall-tops of this structure were well sealed. A small number of marginally raised tiles were present (around the lower size limit required for bat access), mainly aside flues. However internally the roof was found to be unlined (thus with no corresponding crevices beneath tiles). The loft space was cramped (to ~1.5m height), with no bat droppings present.

#### Double storey structures

4.2.1.5 Both the double storey elevations are constructed with rendered brick walls, and pitched clay-tiled roofs with dormer windows. These are not believed to contain significant loft spaces.

4.2.1.6 No gaps or crevices suitable for bats were found within the walls of these structures. However a number of small spaces were noted around the roof structures of each (in places under the eaves, around dormers and at end tiles).

### 4.3 Overall assessment and suitability for bats.

4.3.1.1 No evidence of bats was found during the survey. Those potential features within the direct footprint of proposals could be inspected closely within the loft space, and bat use ruled out.

4.3.1.2 The potential roost features in the double-storey elevations (outside the direct footprint of proposals) were checked for droppings using binoculars. Again no evidence of use was found. Due to their nature, it is possible that individual bats could use these features to roost without leaving obvious evidence (and so this remains a possibility), however it is highly that these could be used by larger numbers without leaving evidence.

4.3.1.3 The overall building was considered to have a suitability of “low” for supporting roosting bats, with this suitability limited to areas outside the direct footprint of the proposals.

### 4.4 Breeding birds and other incidental observations

4.4.1.1 No evidence of nesting birds was recorded during the survey.

## 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

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### 5.1 Impact assessment.

#### 5.1.1.1 Bats;

5.1.1.2 Only features of a negligible suitability for bats were found within the direct footprint of the proposals (the single storey elevation, and the lower walls of the double storey elevations).

5.1.1.3 Some features were however noted outside of the direct footprint: around the roof structures of the double storey elevations. These were considered to have a low suitability: with no droppings or other signs found, and any use likely restricted to use by individual animals of widespread species. These features were considered sufficiently distant to be unaffected during works, as well as to remain viable for any roosting bats once works are complete.

5.1.1.4 No significant impacts to bats are therefore anticipated in the context of the proposals.

5.1.1.5 Bats and their roosts are protected under both the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (as amended: 2017). See Appendix 4 for a summary of legislation protecting bats in the UK.

### 5.1.2 Breeding birds and other incidental observations;

5.1.2.1 No evidence of nesting birds was recorded during the survey.

5.1.2.2 All in-use bird nests (and eggs) are protected under UK law: from the time that nest construction first starts until when the young have fledged. See Appendix 4 for a summary of legislation protecting wild birds in the UK.

## 5.2 Recommendations

### Bats

5.2.1.1 No impacts are anticipated to roosting bats from the proposals, and therefore no actions are required to avoid an offence.

### Breeding birds



5.2.1.2 No evidence of breeding birds was found, however it is recommended to remain vigilant if working during the breeding bird season (March to September). Should birds nest during works these must be retained in situ until the young have fledged.

### 5.3 Potential Enhancements

5.3.1.1 The NPPF (revised 2021) recommends that ecological enhancements are made in order to help provide a net gain for biodiversity. Whilst the proposal is simple, and no ecological impacts are anticipated, an enhancement could be considered in the spirit of the legislation.

5.3.1.2 The most appropriate ecological enhancement would be the installation of a bird box (recommended to be either a swift box or sparrow terrace) on-site. This would be best placed high under the gable of one of the double-storey elevations. Such a box would provide additional opportunities for nesting birds that are currently lacking on-site.

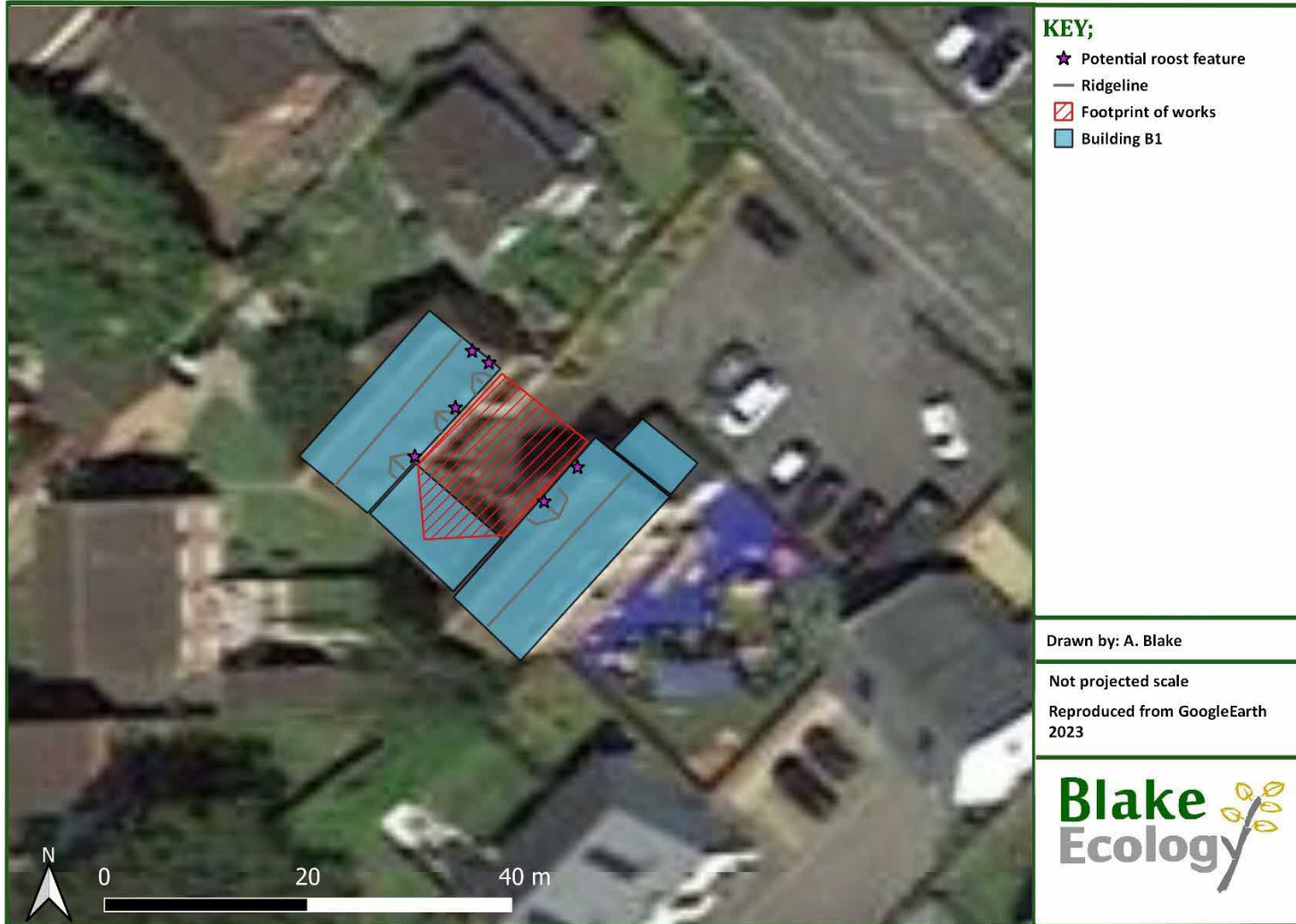
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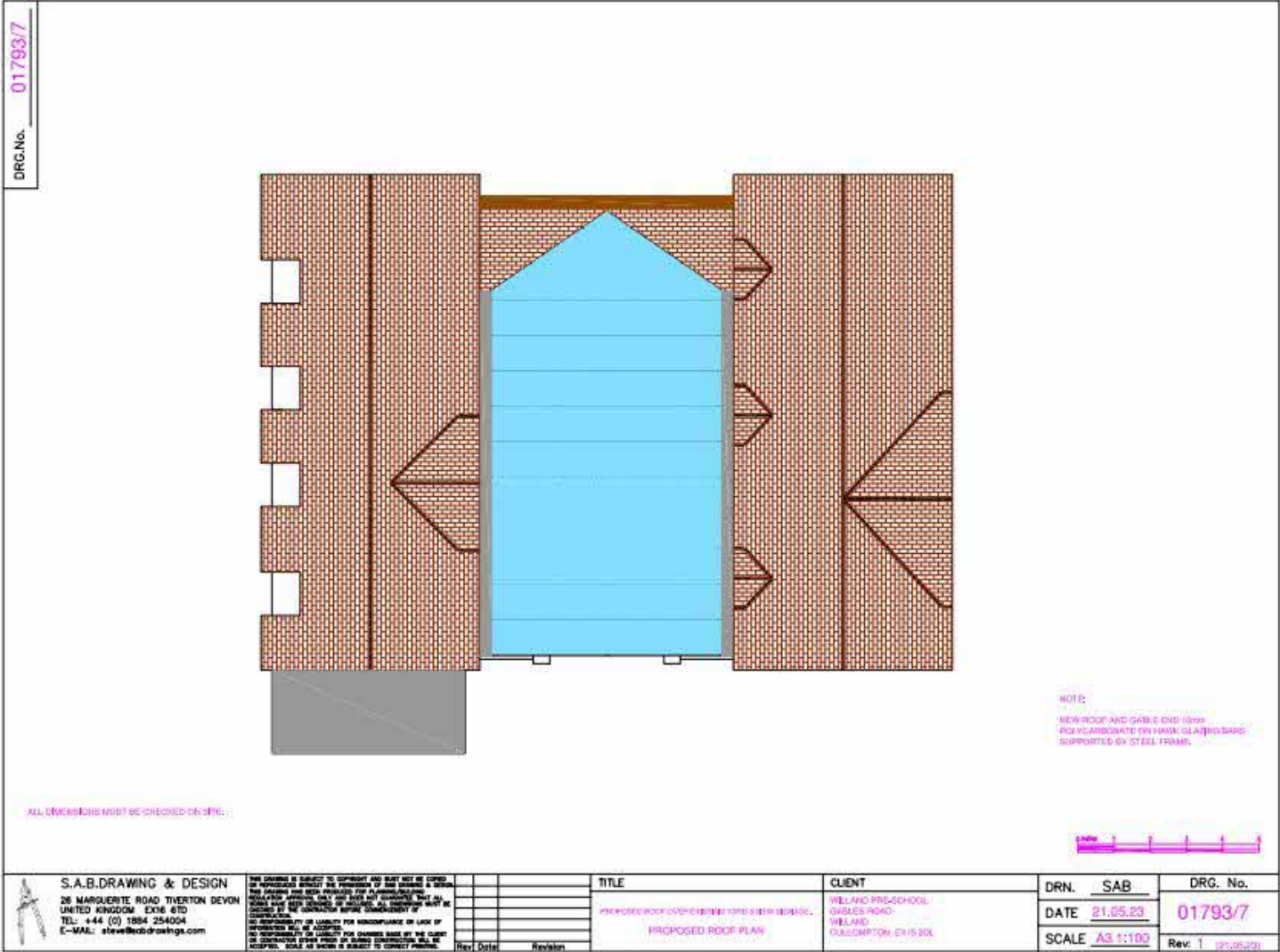
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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Survey Plans



Appendix 2: Proposed Site Plans



DRG.No. **01793/B**



PROPOSED SOUTH EAST ELEVATION



PROPOSED NORTH WEST ELEVATION



PROPOSED NORTH EAST ELEVATION

NOTE:  
SOUTH EAST & NORTH WEST ELEVATIONS ARE AS VIEWED STANDING IN THE YARD.

ALL DIMENSIONS MUST BE CHECKED ON SITE.



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### Appendix 3: Photographs

Image 1: Showing the entire building from the east.



Image 2: The single storey elevation (the main area impacted by proposals)



Image 3: View within loft space.



#### Appendix 4: Legislation

Below is a general overview of the main aspects of bat/bird legislation as most frequently encountered during the planning/development process. This is simplified, and all legislation is subject to change. For a detailed view of the current protection, please refer to the relevant legislation.

#### Bats

Context and legislation –

18 species of bats are resident within the UK, all with their own habits and ecology.

Bat populations declined greatly in the last century, in part due to loss of roosts (or damage to these from unmitigated works). Bats are particularly loyal to their roosts, as well as sensitive to any changes occurring to these. They are also particularly long-lived animals (up to 30 years) that breed slowly (typically only having one pup every one-two years), and therefore populations are slow to recover following disturbance.

Both bats and their roosts are fully protected under both the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (as amended: 2017). Together, this legislation makes it unlawful (amongst other things) to;

Deliberately capture, injure or kill bats

Deliberately or recklessly disturb bats

Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place which bats use for shelter or protection\*

Deliberately damage or destroy a resting place\*

\*Note - A bat roost is defined in the legislation as "any structure or place which a bat uses for shelter or protection". Roosts are protected regardless of whether or not bats are present at that time, and irrespective of whether planning permission has been sought or granted.

Further consideration is also given to species of European Significance (greater horseshoe, lesser horseshoe, barbastelle and Bechstein's) including the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in some regions, with additional local planning considerations.

Considerations for developments –

Impacts to bats (and consequent mitigation options) are dependent on exactly which species are present and how they use a site, along with the specific nature of the proposal. Common considerations include the potential for roosts to be destroyed (or damaged: made less favourable to bats), as well as the potential for animals to be disturbed, harmed or killed during works. Larger developments may also have considerations for maintaining the habitats used by bats, for example in maintaining dark corridors through which bats can commute/forage through the landscape.

Where there is a potential for bats to be present and impacted, surveys are recommended to (in the first place) assess whether these are indeed present, and if so what numbers/species are involved, how they use the site, and consequently if/how they are likely affected by the development. The appropriate survey methods and efforts for bats is detailed in 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines' (Collins 2016).

Various options exist to mitigate impacts to bats, however these are case specific. A thorough knowledge of the bat's use of a site is therefore required to design successful measures. Where impacts cannot be sufficiently avoided to remain within the law, a protected species mitigation license from Natural England is required for works to go ahead. Whilst relatively commonplace, a license application will require that sufficient survey effort had been undertaken to understand the bat use on site, and that mitigation is provided to at least maintain the population at its' current level.

Natural England employ three criteria when assessing license applications;

1. PURPOSE - Needs to be preserve public health, or safety or for imperative reasons of overriding public interest
2. ALTERNATIVES - There cannot be a satisfactory alternative
3. EFFECT ON FAVOURABLE CONSERVATION STATUS. - The proposed action must have not have a negative effect on bats long-term favourable conservation status.

A license may only be applied for following receipt of planning permission. License applications for residential developments tend to be made under "reasons of overriding public interest."



## Breeding birds

### Context and legislation –

All wild birds their nests and their eggs receive blanket protection (with certain exceptions) under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). Among other things, this makes it unlawful to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird

- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built

- Intentionally take or destroy an egg of any wild bird

Certain species of bird (such as the barn owl) receive additional protection under Schedule 1 of the WCA and Annex 1 of the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (2009/147/EC) and are commonly referred to as “Schedule 1” birds. This affords them protection against:

- Intentional or reckless disturbance while it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young

- Intentional or reckless disturbance of dependent young of such a bird

### Considerations for developments –

Ideally where works are planned to features suitable for nesting birds (e.g. trees, shrubs, buildings and areas of tall undisturbed grassland) these should be completed outside the bird nesting season (generally considered to run from March to September). Should this not be possible, any suitable habitat should be thoroughly checked for nesting birds before works. Any active nests found must remain in situ until young have fledged.

BACK PAGE

