

**BAT SURVEY AND  
RISK ASSESSMENT  
FOR 22, LOW GREEN  
GAINFORD**

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August 2023

## SUMMARY

- 1 The aim of the study was to confirm the possible presence of a bat roost in a dormer bungalow at 22, Low Green, Gainford where the living accommodation is to be extended. The building is presently unoccupied but heated over the colder months of the year. The proposal is to re-roof the existing bungalow and extend the property by building a second-floor extension above the garage
- 2 A daylight survey and risk assessment was carried out in August 2023 to establish the potential for bats to use the building.
- 3 No signs of bats were found around the exterior of the building or garage. No potential roost sites were identified in the bungalow or garage.
- 4 There is good bat feeding habitat in the area surrounding the property.
- 5 The exterior of the two-storey building and garage are unsuitable as bat roost or hibernation sites as there are no crevices in the exterior walls, no gaps at the wall tops and no gaps around the window or door frames. There is no potential access into the loft space, so this is unavailable as a roost site. There are many other properties in the general area that may provide potential bat roost sites.
- 6 There is negligible negative risk to any bat species from the proposed re-roofing and extension of the property. No evidence of bats was found and no potential roost sites. Mitigation has been put in place to prevent any accidental harm to bats. Since no bat roost has been identified in the property it is considered that a license from Natural England will not be needed in this instance.
7. In line with good conservation practice mitigation will be put in place to protect the conservation status of bats in the area. This will include careful working practices including careful removal of roofing materials and any timber treatment in the roof areas will use only bat friendly chemicals. A method statement will be given to the contractors carrying out the work to ensure no accidental harm to bats.
8. An integral bat box will be included in the design of the new extension above the existing garage to encourage an increase in biodiversity in the area.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This bat survey, risk assessment and report were commissioned by Johnson Clark Architects on behalf of the owner of the property in July 2023. The aim of the study was to confirm the possible presence of a bat roost in a dormer bungalow at 22, Low Green, Gainford where the living accommodation is to be extended.
- 1.2 The building is presently unoccupied but heated over the colder months of the year. The proposal is to re-roof the existing bungalow and extend the property by building a second-floor extension above the garage.

### Site description (See Photos)

- 1.3 22, Low Green is a two-storey dormer bungalow with rendered and painted walls and a pitched, lined pantile roof. There is a loft space above the dormer.



Front elevation



Rear elevation facing onto the river



Rear elevation

- 1.4 The building is in an excellent state of repair with no cracks or crevices in the exterior walls and the wall tops are sealed. The roof is also in a good state of repair and no potential access points were found into the loft space as the roof is lined. (The assessment of the state of repair only relates to the potential for the building to be used as a bat roost or hibernation site).

#### Surrounding Habitat (See aerial photo below)

- 1.5 The building is located close to the village green with the rear of the property facing onto the River Tees. There are further dwelling houses on either side. There are a large number of mature trees on village green and further trees along the river corridor.



## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **Methods**

- 2.1.1 The daylight survey involved checking the exterior walls and interior of the loft space for signs of bats and assessing the state of repair of the exterior. Given the state of repair of the building and the lack of potential as a roost site, only a risk assessment was deemed necessary in this instance.
- 2.1.2 The signs of bats can include persistent urine stains and these provide a good indication that there is an access point to a roost somewhere above where the stains are found and can be a useful indication that a site is used. Bat droppings may also be found beneath a roost site around the exterior of a building, on the ground, on window sills or adhering to the walls. They can also be found inside buildings and in loft spaces and can be used as an indication of a roost even when no bats are present.
- 2.1.3 There were no cracks and crevices around the window frames and door frames or in the exterior walls that required checking with an endoscope.

### **Risk Assessment**

- 2.1.4 All of the building could be checked for signs of bat use. No Constraints. Weather conditions were fine and dry.
- 2.1.5 **Timing**  
The site visit and assessment were carried out on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2023 towards the end of the bat breeding season. The survey was completed on a fine, dry day.

### **Personnel**

- 2.1.6 The assessment was carried out by an ecological consultant who has worked extensively on bat conservation in North-east England for the past 33 years and holds a scientific license (2015-15609-CLS-CLS).

## **2.2 THE LAW RELATING TO PROTECTED SPECIES**

### **BATS**

- 2.2.1 All bats in Britain are protected by law. Under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act it is illegal to-
- \* catch, injure, kill or sell any bat
  - \* damage, destroy or obstruct bat roosts (even when bats are not present)
  - \* disturb bats while they are roosting, for example by entering known roosts or hibernation sites.
- A breeding site or resting site of any bat is known as a bat roost. A bat roost is any structure as bat use for shelter or protection. It is an offence to damage or destroy a bat roost at any time of year.
- 2.2.2 The following activities are those most likely to cause disturbance to bat roosts-
- \* Demolition of buildings
  - \* Restoration, building conversion or remedial work including re-roofing,

- re-pointing of stonework.
- \* Timber treatment.
- \* Tree felling or extensive tree surgery.

Bats are most at risk from disturbance during the breeding season late May through to late September, after this the nursery roosts disperse. They are also vulnerable during the hibernation period; roughly late November to late March, as they are torpid and unable to move quickly from their hibernation roosts.

- 2.2.3 **Natural England** must always be consulted if any building work, including demolition, is to be undertaken which may cause disturbance to bats or their roost.
- 2.2.4 Any development which is likely to result in disturbance of a European protected species, or damage to its habitat usually requires a licence from Natural England.  
'Development' is interpreted broadly to include projects involving demolition of buildings, rebuilding, structural alterations and additions to buildings.

### 2.3 RESULTS OF SITE ASSESSMENT

- 2.3.1 No signs of bats were found and no potential roost sites were found in the exterior walls of the bungalow or the garage and there were no signs of bats in the loft space.
- 2.3.2 The exterior walls are in a good state of repair with cracks or crevices in the render or at the wall tops. No gaps were found around the window or door frames. No gaps could be seen under the pantiles and there is no potential access into the loft space as it is lined (see below)



2.3.2 There is good bat feeding habitat in the area including the village green and the river.

### 2.3.3 Desk Study

The Durham Bat Group holds the following records for the Gainford area-  
**NZ1515**

2007 Moor House Farm, Caldwell Common pipistrelle Flight

#### **NZ1616**

2002 River Tees Gainford 3 Daubenton's Flight

#### **NZ1715**

2008 High Close House, Caldwell 2 Common pipistrelle Roost

2008 High Close House Brown long-eared Flight  
Natterer's Flight

#### **NZ1716**

2002 Eden Park, Gainford Species unknown Exclusion

2012 Gainford Hall 1 common pipistrelle Roost  
2 whiskered/Brandt's Foraging

#### **NZ1717**

2005 Academy Gardens, Gainford Species unknown Exclusion

#### **NZ1816**

2008 Snow Hall, Gainford 106 Soprano pipistrelle Roost  
21 Brown long-eared Roost

2009 Snow Hall Common pipistrelle Roost  
Soprano pipistrelle Roost  
1 Noctule Flight

Gainford lies on the River Tees and is an old village with many houses that provide potential roost sites. It is a bat-rich area.

### 2.3.4 Bats in County Durham

The following is a brief summary of the main bat species found in the county giving their roost preferences in Summer, and possible Winter hibernaculum sites.

1&2 Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and Soprano Pipistrelle (*P.pygmeus*) roosts are found predominantly in buildings, both old and new. Summer roosts are found in external cracks, behind board cladding and panelling, and behind weather boards, only rarely in the roof space itself.

Winter hibernaculum sites may be in buildings which are at a constant cool temperature and draft-free or in holes in trees. These are the most widespread and common bat species in Britain and is found in both urban and rural areas.

- 3 Daubenton's Bat (*Myotis daubentonii*) is found in woodland and parks, usually where there is water. Summer nursery roosts are generally in tree holes or in older large buildings including churches and other substantial buildings near water. There are occasional roosts in smaller private houses. Winter roosts are found in caves, mine workings, cellars or similar which maintain a cool even temperature.
- 4 Whiskered bats (*Myotis mystacinus*) feed in parks, gardens and over flowing water, but also hunt over open fields. Roosts are often in buildings and winter hibernation sites include mine tunnels, cellars and cracks in walls. In County Durham, this species is generally found in rural areas, but urban roosts are known.
5. Brandt's Bat (*Myotis brandtii*) is mainly a woodland bat and associated with rural areas. Summer roosts are in narrow crevices in roof timbers of buildings, behind roof boarding or in holes in beams. The species hibernates in caves, tunnels and mine workings.
6. Natterer's Bat (*Myotis nattereri*) is predominantly a woodland bat and therefore mainly found in rural areas, but does sometime occur in semi-urban sites. The Summer roost sites are in tree holes and bat boxes but also in roof spaces. Winter hibernation sites are mine tunnels, caves, cellars etc.
- 7 Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*) is predominantly a woodland bat but is also found in large parks. The Summer nursery roost are usually in tree holes, but it has been recorded in hollow poles, bridges and gaps in buildings. In winter it roosts in well insulated tree holes or in deep crevices in natural rock faces or in buildings.
- 8 Brown long-eared bats (*Plecotus auritus*) are most generally found in rural areas. Nursery roosts are in attics and tree holes, with winter roosts in buildings and cellars. This species often roosts within the roof space and bat droppings are frequently found below the roof apex. These bats show a marked preference for older buildings.



## **2.4 SITE EVALUATION**

- 2.4.1 The exterior of the two-storey building and garage are unsuitable as bat roost or hibernation sites as there are no crevices in the exterior walls, no gaps at the wall tops and no gaps around the window or door frames. There is no potential access into the loft space, so this is unavailable as a roost site.
- 2.4.2 There are many other properties in the general area that may provide potential bat roost sites.
- 2.4.3 There is good bat foraging habitat in the area including the village green and the River Tees corridor.

## **3 IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 3.1 There is negligible negative risk to any bat species from the proposed re-roofing and extension of the property. No evidence of bats was found and no potential roost sites. Mitigation has been put in place to prevent any accidental harm to bats.
- 3.2 There is always a very small possibility of a bat/bats being found during any building work or demolition work on any building of any construction. In line with good conservation practice, precautions need to be put in place working on the assumption that a bat(s) could be present.
- 3.3 Since no bat roost has been identified in the building it is considered that a license from Natural England will not be needed in this instance.

## **4. MITIGATION**

### **Maintenance of Conservation Status**

- 4.1 Given it is a known that bats occur in the general area, the following mitigating steps will be taken to minimise any possible impacts -
  - a) The contractors will be made aware of the need to proceed with caution and to check for the presence of bats. They will be requested to follow a method statement, and should there be any difficulty complying with this method statement they will contact the consultant for further advice.
  - b) All roofing materials from the bungalow and garage will be removed with care. Particular care will be taken when removing the pantiles as there is a very small chance a bat or bats could be roosting beneath them.
  - c) Any timber treatment in the roof area will use only 'bat friendly' chemicals. The new timber in the roof area will have been treated with similar products.
  - d) In the unlikely event of a bat or bats been found during the roofing work and accidentally disturbed, work will cease and the consultant will be

contacted for advice (Tel 0191 3773697). If it is necessary to remove a bat to prevent it being harmed, then it will be handled with care and gloves will be worn. It will be transferred to a box with ventilation and placed in a quiet place until it can be released at dusk or removed to another undisturbed part of the building where it can be placed out of the view of predators.

e) In the event of the consultant not being available Natural England will be contacted for advice. All contact numbers will be left with the owners and the contractors.

4.2. A method statement has been appended to this report that is to be issued to the contractors carrying out the work.

4.3 **Habitat Creation**

An integral bat box will be included in the design of the new extension above the existing garage to encourage an increase in biodiversity in the area. (See architects drawing)

## METHOD STATEMENT FOR 22, LOW GREEN, GAINFORD

1. Objective - To maintain and protect the populations of bats in the Gainford area

2. Though the property has been assessed as very unlikely to support a bat roost, it is known that bats occur in the area and it is still possible to discover a bat during building or roofing work.

A bat can be hidden away in cracks, in rubble fill within a wall, in gaps in the mortar around windows, under roofing materials or behind hanging tiles and can be difficult to see. Therefore, great care is needed when working on any building when there are bats in the area.

It is the responsibility of the contractor to follow the guidelines set out below in Section 4 to ensure that no bats are harmed.

3. All bats in Britain are protected by law. Under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act it is illegal to-

- \* catch, injure, kill or sell any bat
- \* damage, destroy or obstruct bat roosts (even when bats are not present)
- \* disturb bats while they are roosting, for example by entering known roosts or hibernation sites.

A breeding site or resting site of any bat is known as a bat roost. A bat roost is any structure as bat use for shelter or protection. It is an offence to damage or destroy a bat roost at any time of year.

The following activities are those most likely to cause disturbance to bat roosts-

- \* Demolition of buildings
- \* Restoration, building conversion or remedial work including re-roofing, repointing of stonework.
- \* Timber treatment.

4. The following guidelines must be followed when working on the building-

a) All roofing materials that need to be removed must be removed carefully by hand. Special care should be taken when removing the pantiles and roof lining as there is a very small chance that bats could potentially roost beneath them.

b) Any timber treatment in the roof areas should use only 'bat friendly' chemicals. The new timber in the roof area of the extension should only have been treated with similar products.

c) In the very unlikely event of a bat/bats been found during roofing work and accidentally disturbed, work must cease and the consultant should be contacted for advice (Tel 0191 3773697). If it is necessary to remove a bat to prevent it being harmed, then it should be handled with care and gloves should be worn. The bat should be transferred to a box with ventilation and placed in a quiet place until it can be released at dusk or removed to another undisturbed part of the buildings where it can be placed out of the view of predators.

e) In the event of the consultant not being available Natural England should be contacted for advice. The contact numbers for the consultant and Natural England should be kept on site.