

SRN Consulting

7 Westbrook Avenue, Prescott, Liverpool, L34 1NU
Tel: 07739896802, Email: srnconsulting@hotmail.com

Supplied to:

Fred Driscoll @ AD Consultancy
Email: adconsultancy@gmail.com

Reference: Park Road, Blackpool

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Letter Report: Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment – Partially Demolished Garage, land adjacent to 98 Park Road Blackpool FY1 4ES

Introduction

SRN Consulting were commissioned to carry out Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment of a small, partially demolished detached garage, to the rear of properties on Park Road, Blackpool (Grid reference: SD 31434 35733).



The proposed works

The proposed works are for the demolition of the remains of the detached garage building to enable complete clearance of the site.

Personnel & Quality Assurance

Rob Nicholson BSc (Hons) MCIEEM is a Class 2 Bat licence holder (Natural England), has over 15 years' relevant experience as an ecologist and is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Rob has held numerous European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) for bats in England and Wales over past eight years. All field work and assessment was undertaken broadly in accordance with current best practice guidelines (Collins, J. (Ed) 2023).

Legal status

In England, all British bats and their roosts are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

These pieces of legislation combine to give substantial protection to bats and their roost sites, making it an offence to:

- Deliberately or intentionally kill, injure or take a bat;
- Damage, destroy or intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection (this is taken to mean all bat roosts whether bats are present or not);
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.

Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 places a statutory duty on public bodies such as local authorities that “every public body must, in exercising its functions have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”. Section 41 of the NERC Act requires the Secretary of State to draw up a list of Habitats and Species of Principal Importance which should be used to guide decision-makers (which include local authorities) in implementing their duty under Section 40 (see below for relevant bat species).

Desk Study

According to the Natural England online mapping resource MAGIC there are no statutory designated sites for which bats are a qualifying feature within 2 km of the site. There are also no granted European Protected Species Licences relating to bats within 2 km of the site.

Field Survey

The field survey (Preliminary Roost Assessment) was undertaken on Sunday 19th November 2023.

The site is a cleared area comprising of bare ground, Heras fencing, general rubbish and the remains of a garage (the subject of the assessment). The site is in an urban location with roads and mixed residential and commercial property in the locality.

There is artificial lighting in the vicinity of the site, associated with nearby buildings (security lights) and street lighting. Habitat for bats in the vicinity of the site is poor and limited to a small number of yard areas, some of which contain a small number of trees, shrubs or lawn.

The building is a small brick building with a simple timber roof structure overlain with terracotta roofing tiles which are underlined with bituminous felt. There is an open garage door (blocked open by bags of rubbish) to the south-western aspect with a timber door lintel above. The roof is damaged and exposed to the north western aspect (daylight and elements entering through this). The building is propped up with scaffold poles to the eastern aspect.

The floor of the building is stacked with binbags and general household rubbish

The building was inspected (using an endoscope to inspect accessible crevices) where safe access was possible and using close focussing binoculars to check for any field signs indicative of the presence of bat roosts.

Results

Features with the potential to support bat roosts present include gaps in brickwork to the south-western aspect and potential access to spaces between tiles and felt. However, no evidence of the presence of bat roosts was identified through inspection of the structure.

The exposed nature of the building (which is located in a coastal area) will result in significant draught passing through the open garage door and through the exposed/damaged roof section to the north western aspect. In view of this, and the poor-quality habitat in the locality of the site (including likely elevated levels of artificial lighting) the potential for the building to support bats is considered to be diminished.

Overall, in view of the value of the site for bats, the scale of impact is considered likely to be low (Mitchell-Jones, 2004).

Recommendations

In view of the presence of small number of features with potential to support bats roosts, but taking into consideration the small scale of the building, poor-quality habitat in the vicinity of the site, environmental conditions affecting the structure (due to the garage door being wide open to the elements and the north-western section of roof being damaged and open), further survey is considered disproportionate and therefore not recommended.

However, it is recommended that the following measures are adopted on a precautionary basis:

- Soft demolition of building under supervision of a suitably licenced ecologist.
- Demolition should take place outside of the active period for bats (taken to be March – October inclusive) with demolition taking place Dec 2023 – March 2024.
- Provision of 1 x bat box (Beaumaris WoodStone Bat Box Midi or similar). To be installed at a minimum of 3m with a southern aspect on a nearby building, wall or mature tree.
- The bat box should be positioned away from direct illumination by artificial lighting.

The above recommendations are considered to be proportionate in relation to the potential for bats to be present and will also avoid any potential conflict with nesting birds by avoiding demolition during the nesting bird season (March – August inclusive).

In the event demolition does not take place in the above period, the need for further bat survey should be reviewed.

Conclusion

Where the recommendations outlined in this report are adopted, it is not anticipated that the proposed development will adversely affect the favourable conservation status of bats (or disturb nesting birds), and the legislation and policy relating to the protection of bats and nesting birds has been suitably addressed.

Signed,

R. Nicholson

Rob Nicholson BSc (Hons) MCIEEM
On behalf of **SRN Consulting**

Site Photos

