

5th December 2023
Our reference: 2023/10/17

Rose Cottage, Styants Bottom Road, Seal TN15 0EZ, Kent

23/01741/HOUSE

The site and its immediate surroundings were considered in terms of potential habitat for bats during a day-time walkover survey undertaken on 27th November 2023 by Katia Bresso CEnv MCIEEM, a qualified professional consultant ecologist with over 20 years of experience, licensed bat surveyor (Class Licence CL19, Level 3, Registration Number: 2016-27133-CLS-CLS) and Registered Consultant of the Bat Low Impact Class Licence WML-CL21 with Natural England (Registered Consultant Reference Number RC056, since May 2015).

A visual examination of the external and internal areas of the building was undertaken. This consisted of a visual inspection using a bright torch (Cluson CB1 Clubman Standard High Power, 500,000 candle power). Cracks and holes were inspected using an endoscope, if needed. The purpose of the survey was to look for signs of bats such as droppings, urine staining, marking around entrance/exit holes, and any animals; and to note any potential roosting locations and access points. The latter is important because signs of bats are frequently not present; for example, they can be washed off external surfaces by wind and rain and are often not visible where bats roost in crevices such as gaps between tiles and boarding or felt, behind weatherboarding, holes in brickwork, timbers and similar.

The surrounding landscape consists of pasture with hedgerows and woods, providing suitable habitat for bats.



No bats nor signs of bats were found during the internal/external inspection of the house.

The house is a two-storey detached brick dwelling with clay tiles over roofing felt. Such roof covering provides opportunities for crevice-dwelling bats (such as pipistrelle) which could roost between the tiles and roofing felt (and would not leave external signs of their presence). The house is judged as providing high suitability for crevice-dwelling bats.

At the time of inspection, there was only a small crawl space under the slopes of the roof, around the converted roof space. Indeed the additional conversion (for which the planning application is being applied for) had already taken place, and the new and enlarged roof lights had already also been installed. The owner indicated that no bats had been found by the builder during these works.

The owners also indicated that, in the 12 years of their residency at the property, they had never noticed any bats emerging from the house (but had noticed bats flying in the garden). The house is therefore unlikely to have been or be used as a maternity roost by pipistrelle bats as such roosts are conspicuous. However it may be used by a small number of bats as a day roost, which would be easily not noticed.

The works themselves were very localized, disturbing and removing only small areas of roof tiles (around the three roof-lights which have been widened and to make way for the two new roof-lights). The builders didn't come across any bats during the tile strip, which took place during the summer.

The usual process for such works to a roof with bat roosting suitability should have included night-time bat surveys in May-August, to check that indeed, no bats were roosting, prior to works starting. If bats had been found, a mitigation strategy would have been needed, including supervision of works by a bat-licence ecologist and provision of alternative roosting features and a mitigation licence would have needed to be in place prior to works taking place.

As the works have now taken place, such surveys and licences are not needed. Most of the roof is still clay-tiled and thus available for roosting bats.

However, it is recommended that, to compensate for the loss of areas of tiles for the new roof-lights, two woodcrete bat boxes be installed on trees or garage (away from artificial lighting and at 4-5m high minimum).

I remain at disposal for any further information concerning these matters.

Written by Katia Bresso CEnv MCIEEM
Principal Ecologist @ KB Ecology Ltd

Photos:



■ IMG_2797



■ IMG_2798



■ IMG_2799



■ IMG_2800



■ IMG_2801



■ IMG_2802



■ IMG_2803



■ IMG_2806



■ IMG_2807



■ IMG_2808



■ IMG_2809



■ IMG_2811



■ IMG_2812



■ IMG_2814