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Bat Assessment at 15 West View, Stowmarket, Suffolk. IP14 1SD.

On Behalf Of:

Mr & Mrs Walton

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0 SUMMARY

- 0.1 Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd. was commissioned by Mr & Mrs Walton to undertake a bat assessment at 15 West View, Stowmarket, Suffolk. IP14 1SD. The report is required for a planning application for two new extensions.
- 0.2 The survey was conducted on the 9th January 2024 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 undertaken through the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service.
- 0.3 The site and proposed construction zone includes: a modern, detached, double-storey, brick house with a pitched, tiled roof, with interlocking tiles and ventilation tiles. A flat roof front porch was also present on the northern elevation. The proposal would aim to replace the front porch with a single-storey extension and erect a double-storey extension on the western elevation.
- 0.4 The site is located in a residential location with housing and modest gardens north, east and west. South of the site is mature riparian vegetation and the River Ratt optimal for foraging bats.
- 0.5 No signs or evidence of bats were found associated with the house, including inspection of the loft. Potential for roosting was considered negligible. The roof and soffits were well-sealed to bats.
- 0.6 Therefore, the risk of harm or impact to bats, bat roosts or local bat conservation was considered negligible. Further bat surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary.
- 0.7 However, to minimise any residual risk of impact, non-licensable precautionary measures, detailed later in the report, should be followed.
- 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 Walton to undertake a bat assessment at 15 West View, Stowmarket, Suffolk. IP14 1SD. The report is required for a planning application for two new extensions.
- 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 2023 (NPPF) (MHCLG, 2023).
- 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 supplied by the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS).
- 2.1.2 These records 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 9th January 2024 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 modern, detached, double-storey, brick house with a pitched, tiled roof, with interlocking tiles and ventilation tiles. A flat roof front porch was also present on the northern elevation. The proposal would aim to replace the front porch with a single-storey extension and erect a double-storey extension on the western elevation.
- 3.1.2 The site is located in a residential location with housing and modest gardens north, east and west. South of the site is mature riparian vegetation and the River Ratt optimal for foraging bats.

3.2 Data Search

- 3.2.1 The following information is a list of local bat records collated through SBIS.

Table 1 - Summary of local bat records.

Species	Location	Year
Brown long eared	Great Finborough	2014
Common pipistrelle	Great Finborough	2014
Soprano pipistrelle	Great Finborough Church	2015
Natterers	Great Finborough Church	2015

3.3 Bats

Building Suitability for Bats

- 3.3.1 The proposed construction zone was well-sealed to bats with negligible opportunities for external roosting or access for bats into internal spaces. No signs or evidence of bat activity were discovered associated with the proposed construction zone.

Other Protected & Priority Species

- 3.3.2 No bird nests (old or active) were present.

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 Bats have been recorded locally and are likely to use adjacent habitats south of the site for foraging.

- 4.1.3 However, no signs or evidence of bats were found and potential for roosting or access into the building was considered negligible.

- 4.1.4 Overall, it was considered that the risk of harm or impact to bats, bat roost or local bat conservation was considered negligible. Therefore, further bat surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary. No Natural England bat licence is required.

- 4.1.5 However, to minimise any residual risk of impact, non-licensable precautionary measures, detailed later in the report, should be followed.

Other Notable Species

- 4.1.6 Works were considered highly unlikely to impact any other protected, priority or notable wildlife or notable habitats.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Precautionary Measures

Bats

- 5.1.1 To minimise any residual risk of impact to bats, the following precautionary measure should be undertaken:

- Where required, roof tiles and soffits should be removed by hand. If at any stage, bats or evidence of bat activity (droppings etc.) are found works should stop and an ecologist called for advice;
- Any new proposed external lighting should be minimised. Where external lighting is required it should be warm white LED lamps (<3000k) as these produce the least amount of UV light possible, minimising the attraction effects on insects and minimising disturbance to local bats.
- Any new external lighting proposed for the development should be aimed carefully, to minimise illumination of boundary habitats and avoid light spillage into the sky, or horizontally out from any buildings, by using hoods or directional lighting.
- External security lighting should be set on short timers and be sensitive to large moving objects only, to prevent any passing bats switching them on.

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, 2023).

- 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 Eco Kent Bat Box (or similar).
- 1 x Vivara pro sparrow terrace.

- 5.2.3 The bat and bird boxes should be installed high (above 4m) on the existing house or new extension. The bat box should be installed facing a southerly direction. The bird box should be installed facing a northerly direction, though as close as possible to the rear garden.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 No signs or evidence of bats were found. Opportunities for access or roosting were considered negligible.
- 6.2 The risk of presence and impact to bats was considered negligible.
- 6.3 Therefore, no further surveys, mitigation or Natural England licence were considered necessary for the proposed development to occur.
- 6.4 However, to minimise any residual risk of impact precautionary measures are provided and should be followed.
- 6.5 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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- English Nature (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines Version 2004*. English Nature, Peterborough.
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- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005). *Government Circular: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System*. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, London.
- Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service. *2km Radius Bat Record Search*. SBIS, Ipswich.

8.2 Appendix 2: Photographs

Photograph 1: Northern elevation (front) at 15 West View.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2024

Photograph 2: Southern elevation at 15 West View.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2024

Photograph 3: Close up of well-sealed soffits at 15 West View.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2024

Photograph 4: Close up of roof tiles – well-sealed to bats (including ventilation tiles) at 15 West View.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023

Photograph 5: Inside the loft at 15 West View.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2024