

**A BUILDING SURVEY AND PRELIMINARY
ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT CARRIED OUT AT**

**24 ST GEORGE'S VIEW
CULLOMPTON,
DEVON EX15 1BA**

**ON THE
12TH JANUARY 2024**



A report prepared by

Dr P. Laurent Duvergé

Kestrel Wildlife Consultants Ltd.

Polly's Meadow, Brithem Bottom, Cullompton, Devon EX15 1NB

For

Mr & Mrs T Ackland.

SUMMARY

A building surveys and Preliminary Ecological Assessment were carried out (by Kestrel Wildlife Consultants Ltd) at a property located at 24 St George's View, Cullompton, Devon EX15 1BA on the 12th January 2024, with respect to the proposed redevelopment of the property to convert the garage and connecting single-storey walkway into a two-storey addition which will be tied into the existing north-eastern elevation of the main building.

The salient points, following our surveys, are that:-

1. Our survey of the property, including the garage, connecting walkway and roof void of the main building, revealed NO signs of use by protected species.
2. The very well-maintained property provides NO readily accessible entry/exit points for bats or birds looking to roost/nest within the structures
3. As a result, we do not believe that the proposed redevelopment is likely to endanger any protected species, and/or adversely affect their local population(s) in the future.
4. Consequently, we do not feel that further bat surveys are necessary prior to the impending planning application being determined and works going ahead.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary	2
Table of Contents	3
Notice to Readers	4
Licences	4
Cartography & Aerial Photography	4
Wildlife Legislation: Important information	4
1. Introduction	5
1.1. General site history	5
2. Site description	6
3. Ecological survey methodologies & protocols	8
3.1. Desk study	8
3.2. General building(s) survey	8
3.3. Other protected species	9
3.4. Constraints and limitations	9
4. Results	10
4.1. Internal inspection of the building(s)	10
4.1.1 The main house & loft	10
4.1.2 The garage and adjoining connecting area	10
4.2. External inspection of the building(s)	11
4.2.1 The main property.	12
4.2.2 The garage and connecting single storey building.	13
4.3. Habitats	13
4.4. Synopsis of observations made during the PEA	13
5. Interpretation of results in view of the development/refurbishment proposals, and their potential ecological impacts on protected species found at the site	14
5.1. Interpretation of results	14
5.1.1 Use of the site by bats	14
5.1.2 Use of the site by birds	14
5.2. Proposed development and/or refurbishment	14
5.3. Potential impact(s) on protected species	14
5.3.1 Bats	14
5.3.2 Birds	14
5.3.3 Other protected species and/or habitats	14
6. Recommendations for future surveys based on observations made during the PEA	15
7. References	15

NOTICE TO READERS

Kestrel Wildlife Consultants Ltd provide balanced advice based on the information and/or data available and/or collected during the study period(s), and within the resources available for the project. We cannot, however, completely eliminate the possibility of important ecological features being found, through further investigation(s) and/or by further surveys, at different times of the year, and/or in different years.

This report is provided for the sole use of the named client(s) and is confidential to them and their professional advisors. Reference to sections, or particular paragraphs, of this document, taken out of context, may lead to misrepresentation.

The findings within this report are relevant for a period of two years from the last survey date. If the project does not begin within two years of the survey date, it is advised that a further wildlife survey of the site be completed to update the information at that point in time.

LICENCES

Laurent Duvergé operated under both a Natural England Class 4 bat survey licence and Registered UK Drone Operator Licence whilst carrying out the surveys. Further details of the said licences can be provided on request.

CARTOGRAPHY & AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

All maps within this report are reproduced courtesy of Ordnance Survey, under KWC's Paper Copying License (Ref. no. LIG1140).

Landscape-scale aerial photographs are courtesy of Google Earth, and site-based/centered aerial photographs were collected by Westcountry Drone Surveys Ltd (a subsidiary of KWC Ltd).

WILDLIFE LEGISLATION: IMPORTANT INFORMATION

NO signs of use by protected species were recorded at this property.

1. INTRODUCTION

Kestrel Wildlife Consultants Ltd were commissioned by Mr Tony Ackland to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) and building survey at 24 St George's View, Cullompton, Devon EX15 1BA, in order to inform the proposed redevelopment of parts of the property and an upcoming planning application regarding the latter.

Our remit was to carry out the PEA and a survey of the property, concentrating particularly on the roof void and areas of the site likely to be used by bats and/or birds, and determine whether:-

1. protected species have used the property recently,
2. given the condition of the buildings, protected species are likely to use the buildings for roosting/nesting purposes in the future, and
3. based on the latest recently published best practice guidelines (Collins, J ed. (2023)) and our expertise, further surveys are likely to be necessary to determine whether the proposed redevelopment of the property is likely to affect protected species present in the area.

This report contains:-

1. details of the information collected during our recent surveys,
2. our views regarding the likely future use of the property by protected species, and
3. potential likely future effect of the redevelopment on said protected species.

1.1. General site history

This property has been in the ownership of Mr & Mrs T Ackland [REDACTED] and is their main residence.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

As can be seen on the cover of this report, the property consists of a two-storey, brick built, semi-detached house which has a roof of concrete tiles. The structure of the roof void of the main building creates an “open” roof with no trusses and only an occasional supporting “King” post formed by modern treated timbers. There were no complex &/or old timbers and/or timber joints across the roof void, minimising potential roosting/nesting features, and the roof void was almost completely boarded, well insulated, and used regularly for storage (see later sections).

Adjacent to the main property, on its north-eastern elevation, is a converted single-storey garage and connecting room/passageway, under a flat, bitumastic felt, roof. There were no potential roosting features for bats or nesting features for birds, and all rooms within the converted garage and connecting passageway were in regular use.

The site (circled in Figure 1 below) is located along the northern edge of the town of Cullompton, Devon.

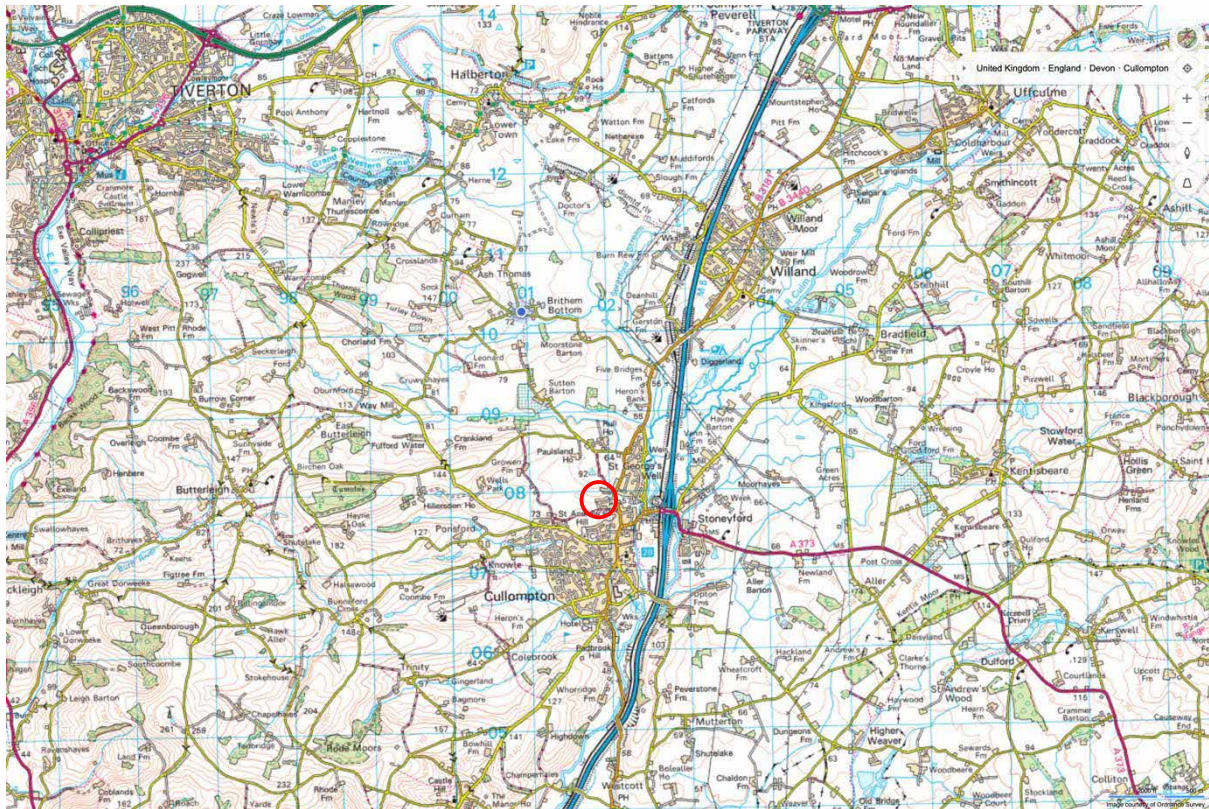


Figure 1:- Site location

The property is currently surrounded by farmland (see Figure 2 overleaf) and is connected to the surrounding landscape by well-developed hedges and treelines along its northern side, as can be seen in Figure 3 (overleaf). However, as can also be seen by the archaeological trial pits visible in the photograph in Figure 3, several fields surrounding the property are in the process of being developed, or will soon be developed, into housing estates.



Figure 2:- Wider landscape features and habitats surrounding the property (circled in red).

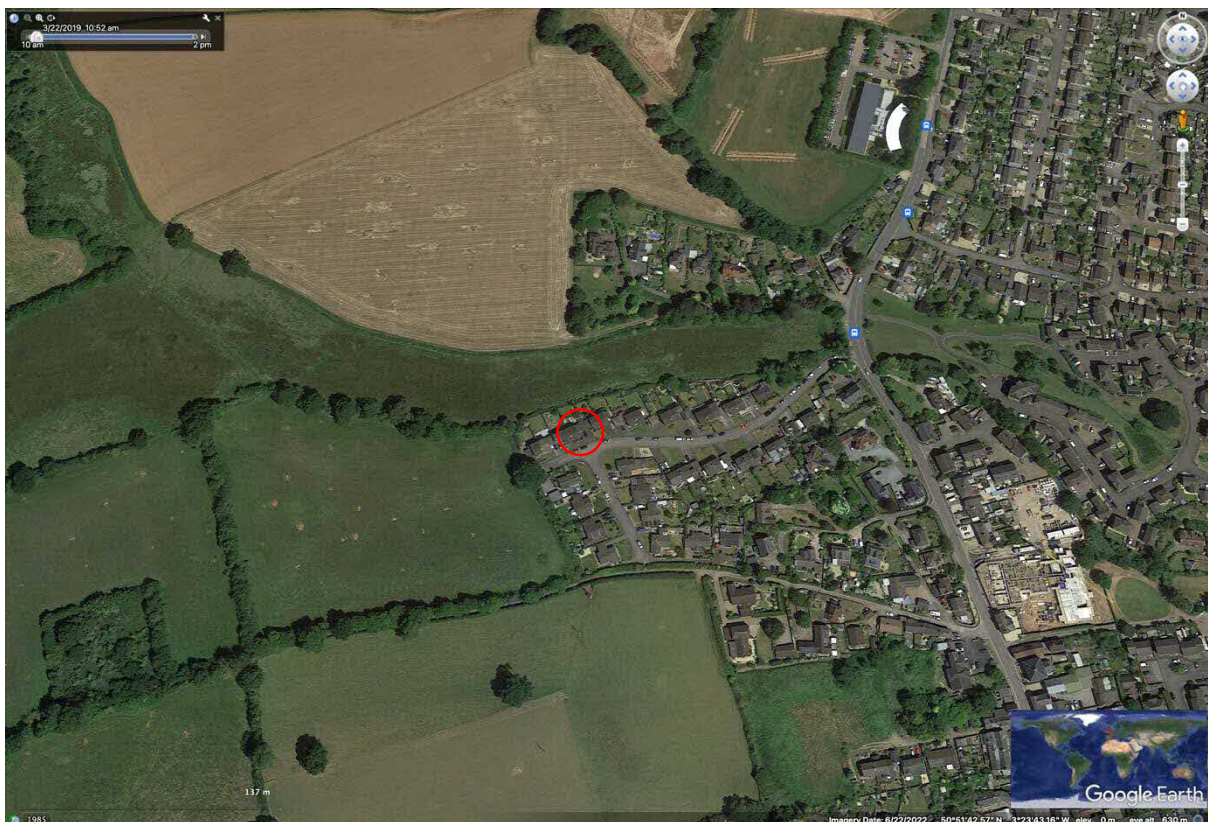


Figure 3:- Landscape features immediately surrounding the property (circled in red), showcasing fields under archaeological investigation to the north and west.

3. ECOLOGICAL SURVEY METHODOLOGIES & PROTOCOLS

There were no plans, at the outset, to carry out any ecological surveys for bats, given the time of year; a decision which will be reviewed once we have gathered more information during our initial building survey and PEA.

3.1. Desk study

A desk study was carried out in order to get an idea of the level of bat activity in the area, and to determine whether the proposed redevelopment of the property is likely to adversely affect protected species, habitats and sites.

The searches carried out on the MAGIC (Magic.Defra.gov.uk) and National Biodiversity Network Atlas (records.nbnatlas.org) web sites showed that:-

there are not many bat records found in the area, with only 12 found within 5km of the site;

- There were 4 records of common pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), 2 records each of lesser horseshoe bats (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) and brown long-eared bats (*Plecotus auritus*), and 1 each of barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*), serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*), Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentonii*) and whiskered (*M. mystacinus*) bats.
- All of these were observations of individual bats with no further details as to the numbers, types of roost and or breeding status involved

The site falls well outside, and is not adjacent to any AONB, LNR, NNR, SSSI or SAC, and falls outside any SSSI Impact Risk Zone as well.

3.2. General building(s) survey

Laurent Duvergé carried out a thorough external and internal survey of the buildings, on the 12th of January 2024, to determine whether:-

1. bats and birds might be able to gain access into either of the structures for roosting/nesting purposes, and whether
2. bats or birds might be using the buildings currently.

During the buildings survey, the condition of the relevant buildings was assessed, and potential access points surveyed to determine whether they offered access options to bats and birds. Potential access options included gaps behind/under fascias, soffits, broken tiles, lifted leadworks etc...

Where necessary/possible, these were also checked for roosting bats, or signs that roosting had taken place at some stage in the past, with an endoscope and/or adjustable mirror, powerful light source and close-focusing binoculars.

Internally, particular attention was paid to areas such as roof voids and elements of the visible roof structure (e.g. timber mortise-and-tenon joints, knot holes), tops of walls, cracks, crevices and holes within the structure, as these are known to be used by roosting bats on a regular basis.

There, time was spent looking for any roosting bats and/or signs of use by bats and/or other animals, and for visible signs of use by those (e.g. bat droppings, prey remains, bird nesting material, bird/small mammal nest(s) etc...).

Externally, binoculars were also used to inspect the higher/more out of reach sections of the roofs and roof edges, and a drone was used to inspect the roof surfaces and areas around the chimney.

NO bats were handled during our surveys.

3.3. Other protected species

We kept a record of any observations of other protected species/wildlife if/as they were encountered within the survey areas.

3.4. Constraints and limitations

All parts of the buildings were accessible and there were no survey limitations.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Internal inspection of the building(s)

4.1.1 The main house & loft

The main house is inhabited and there are no potential roosting/nesting options within the ground and first floor of the property. Access was gained into the loft void through a loft hatch, and the void itself was underfelted throughout with bitumastic felt, well insulated, partially boarded and used for storage. The pitch of the roof is very shallow, and the loft itself spans the width of the property and measures c. 1.5m high. Figure 4, below, gives a very good overview of the state of the loft and, as can be seen in the photographs, it is in regular use for storage.

No signs of use by bats or birds were encountered during the survey.



Figure 4:- Series of photographs illustrating the condition of the loft and its current use.

4.1.2 The garage and adjoining connecting area

The garage consists of a single storey structure capped by a flat bitumastic roof, which is connected to the main property by an enclosed single-storey entrance/walkway area (please refer to the architect's drawings for further details). It is in constant use on a daily basis. Photos of this part of the building can be seen in Figure 5 overleaf.

The garage is currently used partly as a utility room and as an area for a model train layout, as can be seen in Figure 6 overleaf.

No signs of use by bats or birds were encountered during the survey.

Figure 5 (right):- Internal photographs of the connecting walkway/entrance area.

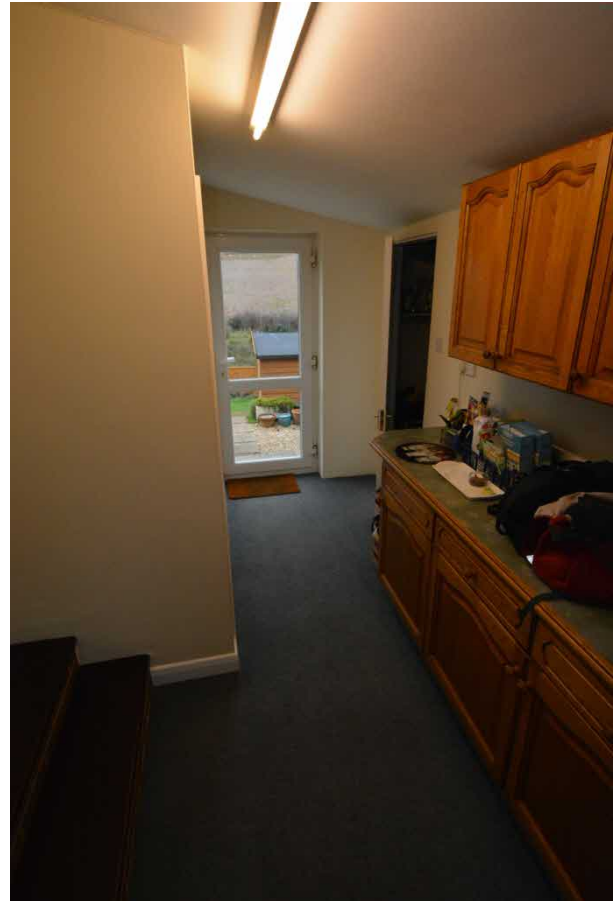


Figure 6 (below):- Internal photographs of the single-storey garage.



4.2. External inspection of the building(s)

As mentioned previously, all likely bat/bird entry/exit locations (e.g. fascias, soffits, raised leadworks, missing tiles etc...) were inspected either at very close quarters (in the case of the single story buildings, or through the use of close-focusing binoculars (for likely possible access points along the fascias and soffits on the main building at roof level), and/or drone (for the roof tiles and chimney).

4.2.1 The main property.

Given the good state of repairs of the property, well dressed leadwork, and sealed/caulked gaps around and below the fascias and soffits, as can be seen in the photographs in Figure 7 below, there were NO likely entry/exit points that we could identify on the main building.



Figure 7:- Photographs illustrating the good state of repair of the features mentioned above in the text.

4.2.2 The garage and connecting single storey building.

As for the main property, areas where bats and/or birds might usually find potential access points into structures were also very well maintained, as can be seen in Figure 8 below and, as a result, we could not find any potential access points for bats (or birds) to exploit.



Figure 8:- Photographs illustrating the good state of repair of the features surrounding the garage and linking structure, which might usually offer potential access locations, to wildlife, into the buildings.

4.3. Habitats

Given the development/refurbishment proposal, no habitats will be disturbed and, consequently, no habitat survey is deemed necessary in this instance.

4.4. Synopsis of observations made during the PEA

NO protected species were observed during our building survey and PEA.

5. INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS IN VIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT/REFURBISHMENT PROPOSALS, AND THEIR POTENTIAL ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS ON PROTECTED SPECIES FOUND AT THE SITE

5.1. Interpretation of results

5.1.1 Use of the site by bats

The total lack of evidence of use of the property structures by bats, and lack of potential entry/exit points for them to do so, leads us to conclude that this site has not been used by these mammals in the recent past, and is unlikely to be so in the future, provided the level of maintenance of the property is maintained.

Consequently, based on the latest guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of a proposed development site for bats (Collins (2023); Table 4.1, pg. 44), we would rate the property as falling in the “None” category.

5.1.2 Use of the site by birds

The total lack of evidence of use of the property structures by birds, and lack of potential entry/exit points for them to do so, leads us to conclude that this site has not been used by birds in the recent past, and is unlikely to be so in the future, provided the level of maintenance of the property is maintained.

5.2. Proposed development and/or refurbishment

The proposed re-development of the property calls for the demolition of the garage and connecting walkway, and the construction of a two-storey addition to the main property, to tie into the roof void of the latter. Further details are available from Mr & Mrs Ackland’s architect.

5.3. Potential impact(s) on protected species

5.3.1 Bats

Based on our observations, it is our opinion that the proposed works will have NO effect/impact on bats in the area.

5.3.2 Birds

Based on our observations, it is our opinion that the proposed works will have NO effect/impact on bats in the area.

5.3.3 Other protected species and/or habitats

Based on our observations, it is our opinion that the proposed works will have NO effect/impact on other protected species or habitats in the area.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE SURVEYS BASED ON OBSERVATIONS MADE DURING THE PEA

Given the lack of evidence of use by any protected species, we do not believe that, in this particular case, any further surveys are required prior to the determination of the proposed planning application.

7. REFERENCES

Collins, J. (ed.) (2023). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

-----oo0oo-----

Dr P. Laurent Duvergé
Kestrel Wildlife Consultants Ltd.
19th January 2024