

A E W C

Bat Assessment Report

The Old Nursery

**Church Lane
Lodsworth
West Sussex
GU28 9DD**

Brigitte de Coriolis

**22-168
January 2023**

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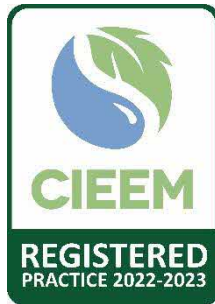
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Report and version number	22-168-BA-v1
Survey Date	6 th January 2023

Summary

AEWC Ltd were commissioned by Geoffrey Marsh to undertake a daytime bat assessment at The Old Nursery, Church Lane, Lodsworth, West Sussex, GU28 9DD at grid reference SU 92900 22857 to help inform the proposed development of the site.

This report details the results of the survey, which was carried out on 6th January 2023 by Brigitte de Coriolis, a Natural England licensed bat ecologist.

The Old Nursery is a timber-framed, two-storey cottage with a clay tile roof and decorative clay hanging to the western gable.

The confirmed proposal for the site is to install a fixed paddle staircase between the first floor and the loft space which is currently used as office space and add additional floor level insulation. The proposal may be extended to include the installation of two velux windows to the southern roof pitch, however this has not been confirmed.

The interior loft void was identified to hold negligible suitability for use by bats. The void is in current use as office space and no evidence of bats was identified internally.

The house was identified to hold high potential externally for crevice-dwelling bats within the batten spaces of the roof and the western gable hanging tiles, due to gaps beneath slipped or lifted tiles.

As the areas to be impacted by the confirmed works are assessed as holding negligible suitability for bats, it is considered that there are no likely significant impacts from the proposed works to any bat roosts which may be present elsewhere on the property and therefore no further survey is required at this time.

The installation of the paddle staircase will involve hand cutting of a small section out of three floor joists adjacent to the existing loft hatch. In the unlikely event a bat is found present during these works, work must stop and the procedure detailed in Section 7 within this report must be followed.

Should the proposals be extended to include installation of velux windows, full bat survey will be required in order to confirm presence of bat roosts at the property and inform a mitigation strategy and licence application for the site, or to increase confidence in an assessment of likely absence of bats from the property. Further surveys, where required, must be carried out within the active season of May to September with a minimum of three surveys required.

This report has been prepared by AEWC Limited, with all reasonable skill, care and diligence within the terms of the Contract with the client. We disclaim any responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the scope of the above. This report is confidential to the client and we accept no responsibility of whatsoever nature to third parties to whom this report, or any part thereof, is made known. Any such party relies on the report at their own risk.

The information and data which has been prepared and provided is true and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Professional Guidance and 'Code of Professional Conduct' issued by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 AEW C Ltd were commissioned by Geoffrey Marsh to undertake a daytime bat assessment at The Old Nursery, Church Lane, Lodsworth, West Sussex, GU28 9DD to help inform the proposed development of the site.
- 1.2 The bat surveys and report writing were carried out in accordance with Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines (Bat Conservation Trust, 2016).
- 1.3 No ecological surveys are known to have been carried out for the site previously. Bat assessment was therefore required to ascertain whether bats, or potential for bats, is present at the site and represents a constraint to the proposed development.
- 1.4 This report details the results of the bat assessment and outlines recommendations in relation to bats and the proposed development of the site.

Aims and objectives

- 1.5 The objectives of the survey were to:
 - Identify the potential of the building on the site to support roosting bats;
 - Identify whether bats are present using the buildings on site;
 - Estimate the size and status of any existing bat roost within the building;
 - Determine the potential impacts on any bat roost from the proposed development schedule; and
 - Provide information for use in the design and development of ecological mitigation and enhancement measures where appropriate.

Site Location

- 1.6 The proposed development site is located at The Old Nursery, Church Lane, Lodsworth, West Sussex, GU28 9DD at central grid reference SU 92900 22857. The site is located in the small village of Lodsworth to the north of the A272 between Petworth and Midhurst. The site lies within the South Downs National Park and is immediately bordered on all sides by other residences, with the surrounding landscape comprising a mosaic of farmland and woodlands connected by mature tree lines and the River Rother within 500m to the east. See Figure 1.



FIGURE 1: SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THE SITE

1.7 The site comprises a semi-detached, Grade II listed cottage within an amenity garden. A small, semi-detached outbuilding within the garden is not subject to any proposals and was therefore not surveyed.

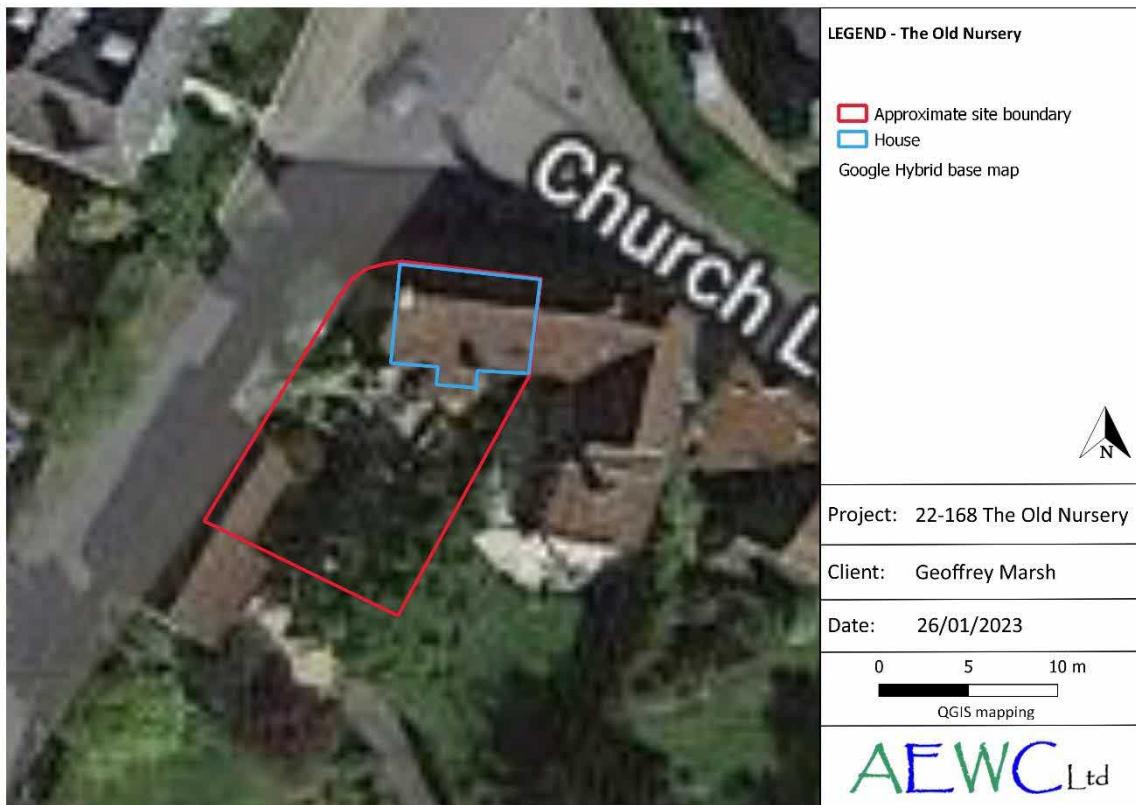


FIGURE 2: SHOWING THE BUILDING SUBJECT TO SURVEY.

Legislation

- 1.8 All species of bats are listed on *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* which affords them protection under *Section 9*, as amended. They are also protected under the *Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019*. In combination, this makes it an offence to:
- intentionally kill, injure or take (capture etc.);
 - possess;
 - intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy, obstruct access to any structure or place used by a scheduled animal for shelter or protection, or disturb any animal occupying such a structure or place; and
 - sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative) or advertise for buying or selling such things.
- 1.9 A roost is defined as ‘any structure or place which a bat uses for shelter or protection’. As bats tend to reuse the same roosts, legal opinion is that a roost is protected whether or not bats are present.
- 1.10 Any disturbance of a bat occupying a roost can lead to prosecution. Disturbance can be caused by noise, vibration and artificial lighting. Penalties for breaking the law can include fines of £5,000 per bat, imprisonment and the seizure of equipment.
- 1.11 Furthermore, seven bat species (barbastelle, Bechstein’s, noctule, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared, lesser horseshoe and greater horseshoe) are also Species of Principal Importance in England under *Section 41* of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*.

Development proposals

- 1.12 The current proposal is to install a fixed paddle staircase between the first floor and the loft space which is currently used as office space, as well as increase the insulation at floor level within the loft. The proposal may be extended to include the installation of two velux windows to the southern roof pitch, however this has not been confirmed.

2 Methods

Daytime Assessment

- 2.1 A detailed bat building inspection was undertaken on the 6th January 2023 by Brigitte de Coriolis, a Natural England licensed bat ecologist.
- 2.2 A systematic internal inspection of the building was conducted using a high-powered torch to illuminate all areas thought to be suitable for roosting bats. Additionally, an external search around the perimeter of the building was conducted and any possible access points i.e. gaps and crevices were noted and surveyed with a high-powered torch and ladder as appropriate.

- 2.3 The building's suitability for bat roosting was assessed by examining structural features that may influence the suitability of a building to support roosting bats; these include the presence of a roof void, the presence of access points into the building (including gaps beneath barge boards, weatherboarding, soffits and fascias, gaps under lead flashing, gaps within masonry and under loose tiles, gaps between tenon and mortise joints), the complexity and size of any roof void and daytime light levels in the roof void.
- 2.4 The building's suitability for roosting bats was also assessed by examining the surrounding habitat. Important habitat features surrounding the structure which may influence roost potential include whether the structure is in a semi-rural or parkland location, its proximity to a significant linear habitat features such as a watercourse, mature hedgerow, wooded lanes or an area of woodland.
- 2.5 All surfaces were also surveyed for signs of bat presence. Features of potential value to bats were surveyed not only for the presence of bats but also for signs that could indicate use by bats, such as:
- bat droppings that are dry and do not putrefy, but can crumble away to dust;
 - staining of access points used by bats to enter the structure; and
 - feeding remains such as moth and butterfly wings.
- 2.6 Taking account of these architectural, habitat features and signs of presence, the building was then assigned a level of roost suitability based the criteria given in the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016) and professional judgement. The primary objective of this exercise was to identify the need for further detailed bat survey later in the year, or alternatively to obtain sufficient information that would dismiss the need for further assessment.

3 Constraints/Limitations

- 3.1 Bats are difficult to locate in large structures, with so many potential roosting areas, particularly in inaccessible areas such as large buildings, finding the exact roosting site can be difficult, especially male/single bat roosting sites. It should be noted that it is not always possible to identify bat presence by examining externally around buildings as poor weather conditions may have washed away droppings which were deposited on exposed surfaces.
- 3.2 Bats can have seasonal use of buildings and being so mobile may arrive and start using a site after it has been surveyed, or roost somewhere else during the period it was surveyed. For this reason, bats may potentially be present but remain undetected, particularly during daytime assessment.

4 Results

Daytime Assessment

- 4.1 The site comprises a Grade II listed, semi-detached two-storey cottage. The house is timber-framed with brick and stone walls, supporting a pitched roof of clay tiles. The western gable wall is clad in decorative clay hanging tiles either side of the chimney.
- 4.2 There is a degree of roof sag evident and coupled with the varying camber of the roof tiles, results in numerous gaps beneath slipped or lifted roof tiles on both the northern and southern elevations, providing access for bats into the batten space. Some gaps were also noted present beneath the western gable hanging tiles due to the decorative rounded edges and a slight degree of tile lift in places. The eaves of the house were fitted with wire mesh throughout which would exclude bats from accessing these areas. No evidence of bats was identified around the exterior of the property.
- 4.3 The roof is lined with bituminous felt, with large polystyrene panels fitted between the rafters from eaves to ridge to improve insulation. The floor is boarded out and the void space has been in use as office space for a considerable time, with fluorescent lighting fitted to the underside of the rafters. At the western end, the fireplace is largely bricked off, although one open section allowed inspection of the narrow cavity between the void and chimney stack; this was found to be layered throughout with thick and often dusty cobwebbing. Insect remains such as lacewing could be seen caught in cobwebbing in several areas, however no evidence of bats was noted within this cavity or anywhere within the roof void.



Photograph 1: *Northern and western elevations of the house*



Photograph 2: *Southern elevation of the house*



Photograph 3: *Gaps beneath roof tiles*



Photograph 4: *Loft space*

5 Evaluation

- 5.1 Initial observations consider the local area suitable for bats. The close proximity of good quality woodland, pasture and the River Rother provides good foraging and commuting habitat for a range of species, with trees and buildings in the local area offering roosting opportunities.
- 5.2 The daytime assessment identified high potential externally for crevice-dwelling bats within the batten spaces of the roof and the western gable hanging tiles, due to gaps beneath slipped or lifted tiles.
- 5.3 While the potential for bats to access the interior roof void from the batten space cannot be ruled out, the presence of the polystyrene panels significantly reduces the available roost provision within the roof void, and the daily use of the space as an office creates high levels of disturbance through light and noise within the void. The roof void is therefore considered to have negligible potential to support void-dwelling species.

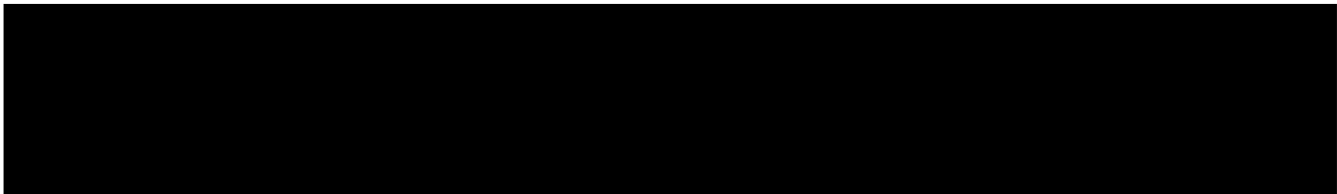
6 Conclusions & Recommendations

- 6.1 The confirmed proposal is for installation of a paddle staircase from the first floor into the loft void and additional floor-level insulation. Only the interior roof void would be directly impacted by these works, this area has been assessed as holding negligible suitability for use by bats.
- 6.2 The house has high potential externally to support crevice-dwelling bats within the batten spaces of the roof and western gable hanging tiles. Under the confirmed proposal, these areas will not be impacted by the works, however if the proposal is extended to include the installation of two velux windows, the batten space of the southern roof pitch will be impacted by this aspect of the works.

- 6.3 **As the areas to be impacted by the confirmed works are assessed as holding negligible suitability for bats, it is considered that there are no likely significant impacts from the proposed works to any bat roosts which may be present elsewhere on the property and therefore no further survey is required at this time.**
- 6.4 **The installation of the paddle staircase will involve hand cutting of a small section out of three floor joists adjacent to the existing loft hatch. In the unlikely event a bat is found present during these works, work must stop and the procedure detailed in Section 7 below must be followed.**
- 6.5 **Should the proposals be extended to include installation of velux windows, full bat survey will be required in order to confirm presence of bat roosts at the property and inform a mitigation strategy and licence application for the site, or to increase confidence in an assessment of likely absence of bats from the property. Further surveys, where required, must be carried out within the active season of May to September with a minimum of three surveys required.**

7 Procedure to follow in the event a bat is found on site.

- 7.1 Bats are present within the vicinity of the site and may be found at any location on, in or around the buildings. Bats are protected species, and these procedures must be followed to avoid committing an offence.
- 7.2 If a bat is found at any location around the site DO NOT TOUCH unless necessary for the safety of the bat.
- 7.3 If the bat was uncovered in a roosting location carefully replace covering ensuring the bat is not crushed or harmed. If this is not possible cover the animal with a loose covering.
- 7.4 Stop all work at that area and the immediate vicinity. Work may continue at other areas around the site.



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