BAT, BARN OWL AND NESTING BIRD SURVEY

on

EMERALD COTTAGE, 16 CLAREMONT TERRACE, BEACON ROAD, BREAGESIDE, PORTHLEVEN, HELSTON, CORNWALL

August 2023

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O.S. Grid Ref:	SW 6272 2563
Survey date:	31st August 2023
Surveyor:	Simon Barnard BSc (Hons) MSc CEcol MCIEEM Class Survey Licence Reg. Nos. 2017-32208-CLS-CLS (Level 3) & 2015-13541-CLS-CLS (Level 4) Barn Owl Class Survey Licence CL29/00170
Time spent on site:	¾ hour
Taxonomic groups covered:	Bats, Barn Owls and Nesting Birds
Report author:	Simon Barnard BSc (Hons) MSc CEcol MCIEEM
Filename & issue number:	BBONB_Emerald Cottage,Porthleven_Final 1
Report for:	Mrs Ingrid Thomas
Report No:	22-316/3HW/Emerald Cottage,Porthleven_BBONB
Report completed:	10th September 2023

Report Sign off

Document checked and approved for issue by:	Debra Barnard MBBCh Director
Signature:	[redacted]
Date:	12th September 2023

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Wheal Grey Ecology Ltd were instructed by Ms Beth Hole, of 3HW Architecture & Design, on behalf of the client Mrs Ingrid Thomas to carry out a visual inspection on Emerald Cottage, 16 Claremont Terrace, Beacon Road, Breageside, Porthleven, Helston, Cornwall looking for evidence of use of the building by Bats, Barn Owls and Nesting Birds. The proposal is to build a single storey rear extension and convert the roof into an en-suite bedroom.

The survey was carried out in the morning on 31st August 2023 and the weather was overcast with regular light rain showers, a light breeze and 100% cloud cover and the temperature was 17°C.

2. DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE

2.1. Description of Building

The building subject to this survey is a semi-detached stone two storey Victorian cottage, which looks out to sea to the south, and has a pitched roof covered with natural slate with a bay window to the front. It has a contemporary extension to the rear, which is shared with the attached cottage, and a small single storey lean-to extension to the rear which has a green roof. The western end of the building has a gable end as is the rear extension, see photos 1 and 2.

Photo 1. Showing the cottage from the south

Photo 2. Showing the cottage from the north

Internally there is a single roof void over the main part of the house which also extends over the rear extension. This is open from the floor of the roof void, which is lined with fibreglass insulation, to the underside of the roof which is lined with bitumen felt. The roof is supported by large wide spaced trusses with the gable ends being bare stone, see photos 3 and 4. The roof space of the attached cottage has already been converted into living accommodation with a plasterboard partition wall and steelwork

have been inserted to divide the roof void and support the roof. There is no roof void over the single storey part of the building.

Photo 3. Showing the roof void over the house

Photo 4. Showing the roof void where it extends over the rear extension

Externally the gable end, roof covering, ridge tiles and leadwork around the chimney are all well sealed. There are gaps behind the fascia boards on the front and rear of the building but these were carefully searched from the ground and do not appear to extend back onto the wall tops and in the case of the ones to the rear of the building have cobwebs between the fascia and wall tops.

2.2. Surrounding landscape

The property subject to this survey is located on the western edge of the small town of Porthleven on the south Cornish coast on a terrace looking out to sea and over the harbour in a very exposed location. The property backs onto open countryside with the harbour and town to the east. The surrounding countryside comprises fields laid to pasture and used for arable crop production with bands of woodland nearby, see figure 1. To the east beyond the town is Loe Pool (the largest natural fresh water lake in Cornwall) with is bounded by woodland and has a number of underground mining features used by hibernating bats.

The habitats surrounding the property represent good urban bat foraging habitat which backs on to open countryside and is well linked into the surrounding landscape. The surrounding area is known to be well used by a range of species of bat including Common, Soprano and Nathusius Pipistrelles, Whiskered bats, Natterer's, Noctules, Brown Long-eared bats and Lesser and Greater Horseshoes.

Figure 1. Google Earth image showing the location of the property (red arrow) and surrounding landscape

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3. METHODS

3.1. Bats

The building was carefully inspected internally and externally, where access allowed, for evidence of the use of the building by roosting bats using a high-power torch, ladders, binoculars and an endoscope (where needed). This included looking for individual or groups of roosting bats and signs that the building is currently, recently or has been historically used for roosting by bats such as droppings or staining around potential access points. It involves searching between any roof timbers, walls and wall tops, any cavities, openings or gaps behind hanging slates or fascia's, window ledges and other protruding features. Additionally, any potential entry points are inspected thoroughly for signs of their use, i.e., staining, polishing or scratching of woodwork (indicating use by bats).

As bats can leave little evidence of their occupation, this survey included an assessment of the potential of the building and features of the building to support roosting bats. This involved identifying potential roosting features including but not limited to cracks, crevices and voids, cavities created by spaced off fascia, hanging slates or split render and any other features capable of providing suitable roosting space for bats.

3.2. Barn Owls

Where suitable access points into the building were present the interior was carefully searched, with the aid of a torch, looking for evidence that the building is used by Barn Owls, for either nesting or roosting. This includes searching for owl pellets, feathers and nest debris, with particular attention being paid to the ground below crossing timbers, below any artificial nest boxes which may have been installed or ledges which could be used by nesting Barn Owls. If any nest boxes or ledges are present and it is safe to do so they will also be inspected for signs of use.

3.3. Swallows and other birds

Suitable ledges, voids and the underside of any floors or timberwork which could provide nesting space for Swallows and other birds were inspected for evidence of previous or current nest building attempts.

3.4. Surveyors' experience and licences held

Simon Barnard is an experienced bat surveyor with over 15 years' experience of carrying out all aspects of professional bat survey work including activity surveys, call analysis and emergence surveys. He has held a Natural England survey licence for more than 12 years, currently being registered on the Level 3 (CL19) and level 4 (CL20) Class Survey Licence. He has been involved in designing numerous mitigation schemes and obtaining European Protected Species development licences for the majority of the species of bats found in Devon and Cornwall and is a registered consultant on Annex's B, C and D on the Natural England's Bat Mitigation Class Licence. He also holds a valid Barn Owl Class Survey Licence CL29/00170.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Bats

No evidence of the use of this building by roosting bats was found during this survey and it was carefully inspected.

4.2. Owls

No evidence of the use of this building by Barn Owls was found, no suitable access point allowing them to access enclosed spaces were found and it would be highly unusual to find Barn Owls in such an urban location.

4.3. Swallows and other bird species

No evidence of the use of this building by nesting birds was found.

4.4. Limitations

No significant limitations on the building were identified but the loft space was only inspected from the loft hatch due to the presence of deep insulation.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Bats

As no evidence of the use of this building by roosting bats was found and the proposed works can proceed with a low to negligible risk of disturbing/harming roosting bats or damaging or destroying a bat roost.

It should be noted that in any building individual bats could occasionally roost. If a bat was to be found unexpectedly whilst the works are being carried out, work should stop immediately and Wheal Grey Ecology Ltd contacted and further advice sort. If a bat were to be found it should be protected from the elements and predators and work activity in the immediate vicinity should stop until further advice is received.

5.2. Barn Owls

No recommendations necessary.

5.3. Swallows and other bird species

No recommendations necessary.

6. MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENTS

6.1. Bats

No evidence of the use of this building by roosting bats was found and therefore no mitigation is required.

However, new roosting opportunities for bats could be incorporated into the building should the owners wish to do so. This could be done fairly simply by installing bolt-on purpose-built bat boxes onto the exterior of the building. This would help to potentially enhance the biodiversity value of the site.

Please contact us at Wheal Grey Ecology for further information if this is something you would like to consider.

6.2. Barn Owls

No mitigation needed.

6.3. Swallows and other bird species

New nesting opportunities for birds could be incorporated into the building by building-in or mounting prefabricated nest boxes onto the exterior of the building. This would help to potentially enhance the biodiversity value of the site.

7. LEGISLATION

7.1. Bats

Bats in England have been protected under a number of regulations and amendments but the most up-to-date and relevant are:

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Section 9)

The result of Regulations and Acts is that all species of bat and their breeding sites or resting places (roosts) are protected under law. It is an offence to:

Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat
Deliberately disturb a bat in a way that would affect its ability to survive, breed or rear young or significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species
Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat at a roost
Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a roost whether bats are present or not
Damage or destroy a roost whether bats are present or not
Possess, control, transport, sell, exchange or offer for sale/exchange any live or dead bat or any part of a bat

Through the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (this has been updated and consolidated with subsequent amendments by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 mentioned above) bats were designated a European protected species as part of a Europe wide effort to conserve certain plant and animal species.

Any development which is likely to result in the disturbance of a European protected species, or damage to its habitat usually requires a European protected species licence from Natural England. 'Development' is interpreted broadly to include projects involving demolition of buildings, rebuilding, structural alterations and additions to buildings.

7.2. Birds

All birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and it is an offence, with certain exceptions, to intentionally:

Kill, injure or take any wild bird.
Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.
Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2017 require public bodies to help "*preserve, maintain and re-establish habitat for wild birds.*"

Barn Owls and other birds listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are given a further level of protection against disturbance whilst breeding.

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