

Preliminary Visual Assessment for Bats and Breeding Birds

Stride Treglown, Norbury Court, 10 Craigie Drive,
The Millfields, Plymouth, Devon,

January 2024



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Project	Stride Treglown, Norbury Court, 10 Craigie Drive, The Millfields, Plymouth, Devon, PL1 3LL
Report Type	Preliminary Visual Assessment for Bats and Breeding Birds
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Original Report Date	14/01/2024
Updates	

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Non-technical summary

LRP Ecology was commissioned by BluePrint Architectural Workshop, on behalf of David Bayliss at Stride Treglown, in January 2024 to complete a preliminary visual assessment for bats and breeding birds of a historic building in Norbury Court, in Plymouth, Devon in support of a planning application. The survey inspected the property for any evidence of roosting bats or breeding birds including barn owl *Tyto alba*.

This survey report and any recommendations has been prepared in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's "Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines".

The survey was conducted on the 12th of January 2024 and the results of this report are valid for 12 months from the date of survey.

Assessment for bats

No evidence of roosting bats was found, the building has negligible suitability to provide a bat roost.

No further survey work is required. Works can with negligible risk to bats. If bats are discovered works should stop immediately and Natural England be informed.

Assessment for breeding birds

No evidence of nesting birds was recorded. No further survey work or mitigation is required or recommended for nesting birds.

1. Introduction

LRP Ecology was commissioned by BluePrint Architectural Workshop, on behalf of David Bayliss at Stride Treglown, in January 2024 to complete a preliminary visual assessment for bats and breeding birds of a historic building in Norbury Court, in Plymouth, Devon in support of a planning application. The survey inspected the property for any evidence of roosting bats or breeding birds including barn owl *Tyto alba*.

This survey report and any recommendations has been prepared in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's "Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines" (Collins, 2023). The survey was completed on the 12th of January 2024 and the results of this report are valid for 12 months from the date of survey. If work has not commenced within this period, an update survey will be required.

1.1. Site context

The building is located within a mixed residential and commercial development built within the former Royal Navy hospital. The immediate habitat for bats and birds is limited to well managed amenity areas to the south and north, with a scattering of early mature broad-leaved trees and ornamental plantings. Further afield to the north lies more amenity grassland (Stonehouse Creek and Victoria Park) whilst to the south the landscape is dominated by urban development.

The immediate habitats are likely to provide low potential for foraging and commuting habitat to a number of common and widespread species of bat in the area tolerant of street lighting. The building is in too urban area for barn owl to survive.



Figure 1. The location of the building surveyed (red line).



Figure 2. The building surveyed at this site.

1.2. Proposed works

Proposals are for new insulation within the roof void of the building.

1.3. Survey aims

To ensure that the proposed development does not adversely affect bats and breeding birds, the survey will:

- Identify the past and/or current use of the site by bats and breeding birds;
- Assess the likely impact of the proposed development on bats and breeding birds;
- Provide a basis upon which to propose further survey work or mitigation, should they be affected by the development.

2. Methods

2.1. Bat roost assessment

Adhering to the methodology by the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, 2023), a thorough examination of both the internal and external areas of the building was conducted to identify any indications of roosting bats. This examination, carried out by a qualified and licensed ecologist using torches, ladders and binoculars, encompassed a ground-level inspection and a meticulous search of the building's interior and exterior.

The goal was to detect bats or signs of their activity, including droppings on walls and windowsills, within roof and loft spaces, rub or scratch marks, staining at potential roost sites, exit holes, and the presence of live or deceased bats. Additionally, features such as raised or missing tiles that could potentially serve as suitable roosting spots for bats were inspected where possible.

In Devon, a total of 16 bat species have been recorded (Barbastelle, Bechstein's, Leisler's Serotine, Noctule, Lesser Horseshoe, Greater Horseshoe, Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Nathusius Pipistrelle, Whiskered, Brandt's, Natterer's, Daubenton's, Brown Long-eared and Grey Long-eared). It is assumed that all these species of bat could be present within the local area and therefore a data search is not considered appropriate. It is very unlikely when considering the location and structure being assessed, and high mobility of these species, that a data search would provide any further meaningful information.

2.2. Breeding birds

The building was searched for evidence of nesting bird species. This included old nests, pellets and liming.

2.3. Surveyor information

The survey was completed by John Blackburn. Mr Blackburn has 14 years' experience working on ecology and conservation projects in the UK and abroad. He has been working on bat surveys for the last 11 years, holds a Level 2 Class Licence to survey bats and is a competent ornithologist.

3. Results

3.1. Bat roost description

The structure is a single-storey Grade II listed stone building supporting with four gabled slate roofs on a flat base. All the roofs were in good condition with no missing or slipped tiles. A dormer window is present in the roof which allowed inspection of the roof centre. No lead flashing was seen to be lifted. Likewise, a glass structure forming a turret is present on the western aspect, again in good condition with the lead flashing tight around the frames. Concrete secures the wall tops and was free of any cracks or crevices. places the original stone has been replaced by block.

Internally a roof void is present within the gabled roofs. These are fairly well lit due to the glass windows. The timber frames of the roof are exposed, with many of the original frames still present. Various membranes and linings lie beneath the roof tiles. The floor is boarded and access around the entire roof space is present.

No evidence of bats was found within the building or the external features.



The building viewed from the east



The building viewed from the north



An example of the roof interior.



An example of the original timber frames.

3.2. Breeding birds

Evidence of feral pigeon was present throughout the roof space however no evidence of breeding was recorded.

4. Species Assessment

4.1. Survey constraints

The survey was completed at a suitable time of year for the inspection of buildings and structures for bat roosts (Collins, 2023), and areas to be searched had not been cleaned/swept prior to survey. All areas of the building were accessible, and a full and complete initial assessment could be made.

4.2. Assessment for bats

As part of the assessment, it is required that buildings are classified for their suitability to support roosting bats, irrelevant of any signs of roosting. This is due to the highly cryptic nature of bats, in particular those species that roost in crevice habitat associated with roof coverings, fascia, soffit, bargeboards, flashing, feather boarding and stonework.

Buildings are classified on their suitability for roosting bats as follows (adapted from Collins, 2023)

No Suitability	No features at all that could be used by any roosting bats at any point in the year.
Negligible Suitability	Negligible features that could be used by bats
Low Suitability	A building with one or more possible bat roost sites. These usually contain small or single numbers of bats. These features are small and so are not used for long periods of time by large numbers of bats.
Moderate Suitability	A building with more than one potential roost site. These roosts tend not to be of high conservation significance.
High Suitability	A building with multiple roost sites that could be used by larger numbers of bats. These roosts are used regularly and for long periods and so are well established. These roosts tend to be of higher conservation significance.

No evidence of roosting bats was found, the building is considered to have **negligible** suitability to provide a bat roost.

4.3. Assessment for breeding birds

No evidence of breeding birds was recorded. No mitigation is required.

4.4. Legislation

Bats

Bat species and their breeding or resting places (roosts) are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. They are identified as European Protected Species. Under these laws it is an offence to:

- capture, kill, disturb or injure bats (on purpose or by not taking enough care);
- damage or destroy a breeding or resting place (even accidentally);
- obstruct access to their resting or sheltering places (on purpose or by not taking enough care); or
- possess, sell, control or transport live or dead bats, or parts of them.

Seven species of bat are listed as being ‘Species of Principal Importance’ under section 41 (England) of the NERC Act (2006). This places a requirement for these species to be taken into consideration during the planning process with a view to conserving biodiversity.

These are Barbastelle, Bechstein’s, Noctule, Soprano Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared, Greater Horseshoe and Lesser Horseshoe and are the subject of National and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

According to Natural England the activities that can affect bats include (from GOV.UK):

- renovating, converting or demolishing a building
- cutting down or removing branches from a mature tree
- repairing or replacing a roof
- repointing brickwork
- insulating or converting a loft
- installing lighting in a roost, or outside if it lights up the entrance to the roost
- removing commuting habitats such as hedgerows, watercourses or woodland
- changing or removing their foraging areas
- using insecticide
- treating timber

Breeding birds

All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) from being killed, injured or captured whilst their nests and eggs are protected from being damaged, destroyed or taken. Some birds which are listed under Schedule 1 of the Act, such as barn owl, are given additional protection against disturbance.

5. Recommendations and mitigation

5.1. Roosting bats

No further survey work is required. Works can with negligible risk to bats. If bats are discovered works should stop immediately and Natural England be informed.

5.2. Breeding birds

No evidence of nesting birds was recorded. In the event that nesting birds appear it is recommended that works continue outside the bird breeding season (March – August inclusive) or an ecologists' advice is sought.

6. Biodiversity enhancement

Net gain is described as a measurable target(s) for development projects where impacts on biodiversity are outweighed by the mitigation hierarchy approach to first avoid, and then minimise, impact including through restoration and/ or compensation. This is now a requirement under the Environment Act 2021.

The biodiversity value of the site for roosting bats post-development could be enhanced by installing bat tiles within the fabric of the new roofs, on the building exterior, or elsewhere within the site. If these features are used, type 1F bitumen felt should be used.

NB: suitable products are available from www.nhbs.com, www.wildcareshop.com and www.greenandblue.co.uk

7. References

Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (4th edition). The Bat Survey Trust, London. ISBN-13 978-1-872745-96-1

Environment Act 2021: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted>