

**9 Longbrook Street**  
Plympton St. Maurice  
PL7 1NJ

## Topic-specific Ecological Appraisal

For

Mr. & Mrs. Steven Neill

September 2023



Survey carried out, report written and checked by  
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Written on 06.10.2023

Reference *9LongbrookStreetPEA.doc*

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### 1 The purpose and scope of the appraisal

1.1 The author has been instructed by Derek Butler of the Architectural Services Co. who is acting for Mr. & Mrs. Neill, owners of the terraced property, to carry out an ecological appraisal of the exterior & interior of the roof of the kitchen extension. The roof would be affected by proposals to remove the pitch and to replace it with a flat roof, in accordance with the architect's drawings.

1.2 The specific purpose of the survey, which was carried out on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2023, was to identify any opportunities for bats to roost, or birds to nest, within any part of the roof that would be replaced, or to note any evidence of recent or past use by any protected species. A number of images were taken during the survey and eight of these are used as an appendix, to illustrate this report.

### 2 Biodiversity and planning legislation

2.1 Local Planning Authorities are now charged with the responsibility for protection of endangered species, under the European Union Habitats Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Council Directive 92/43/EEC. This Directive was implemented, initially, in the UK by the Conservation (Natural Habitats & Conservation) Regulations 1994 (Statutory Instrument No 2716) amended in 2007. These Regulations were updated and consolidated, within the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. These have subsequently been amended within the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (Statutory Instrument 2012 No.1927). The presence of protected species is a **material consideration**, when a local authority is considering a planning application that could affect any protected species.

2.2 Obligations placed on owners of land to comply with UK wildlife legislation, European Habitats Regulations and Directives, while they are using or developing the land in any way, have been taken into account and referred to, where directly relevant, within this report.

**2.3** Local Authorities have a duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity within developments they permit. Local Planning Authorities will seek to produce a net gain in biodiversity by requiring developers to design wildlife into their plans and to ensure that any unavoidable impacts are appropriately mitigated for. The importance of habitat enhancement has been identified within Section 40 (1) of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act* (2006). The revised National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) states in Section 179 that “planning policies and decisions should identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains in biodiversity”. It also states that applications that aim to conserve or enhance biodiversity, should be supported. An eventual need to address the provision of a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) was introduced in the Environment Act 2021. However, as current legislation stands, such an obligation to provide BNG will not be mandatory until November 2023. The Biodiversity Metric 3.1 and the Small Sites Metric are in the process of formal consultation, ahead of the publication of what would become the Secretary of State’s officially sanctioned Biodiversity Metrics, to be used for mandatory BNG, post November 2023.

**2.45** All species of bats are protected under Schedules 5 and 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and as amended) and they are also protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Bats are listed under Appendix III of the Bern Convention and Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive. Bats and their habitats are also listed under Appendix II of The Bonn Convention.

**2.5** The author surveyed those parts of the roof of the property, which would be affected by the proposal to remove the pitched roof and to replace it with a flat roof. The survey was carried out in order to identify either the presence, or dependent use of the property, by protected or notable species. It was evident that the design of the roof and materials used create the joins between the top of the rendered wall and the underside of the roof, provide no opportunities for bats or birds to enter the roof space above the kitchen extension.

**2.6** It would be unlawful to disturb any wild birds, their eggs or chicks while they are nesting, if there were to be any current evidence to nesting within, or on the outside of the kitchen extension that would be re-roofed. Any building work that has to be carried out during any part of the nesting season, (1<sup>st</sup> March –31<sup>st</sup> August), should there be any evidence of any nesting activity, would need to be overseen by a suitably qualified ecologist, to ensure that no nesting birds would be disturbed.

### **3 Data search**

**3.1** A data search by the Devon Biodiversity Record Centre was not requested. That is due to the very small area of the site and the survey being limited to the roof of a rear extension to a terraced house in an urbanised part of Plympton St. Maurice. Replacement of the roof over the kitchen extension would have no impact any semi-natural or artificial habitats in the vicinity. The survey has demonstrated that the proposed replacement of the roof would have no discernable or measurable impact on biodiversity. Reasonable and proportionate mitigation and habitat enhancement proposals are, however, recommended within **Section 6** within this report. That is done in recognition of obligations to enhance biodiversity, which are set out within the NPPF (2021).

### **4 Description of the property**

**4.1** The property consists of a terraced house with three floors and a kitchen extension to the rear. The property has single-storey garage attached to its north-western wall, which would be unaffected by the replacement of the roof over the kitchen extension. The garage and the house both have access onto Longbrook Street. A narrow passageway leads from the very small rear courtyard, running between the gardens of adjoining houses, to a small and enclosed garden to the north- east of the property.

The images show that some of the slates on the roof of the kitchen extension have been replaced, where they abut onto the slate-hung back of the house. The slate cladding on the back of the house would be largely unaffected by replacement of the kitchen roof, but new slates will be added in the triangular space that would be left when the pitched-roof is removed. The lead flashing is in good order, without gaps.

**4.2** What became very clear, as a result of the survey, is that the roof-space is not accessible for use by roosting bats or nesting birds.

### **5 Summary of survey findings**

**5.1 Herbaceous plants** No native plants would be affected by the proposed replacement of the kitchen extension's roof.

**5.2 Shrubs and hedges** No shrubs or hedges would be affected by the proposed replacement of the kitchen extension's roof.

**5.3 Trees** No trees would be affected by the proposed replacement of the kitchen extension's roof.

**5.4 Nesting birds** There was no evidence of any birds nesting, or having nested, in any parts of the roof-space above the kitchen extension.

**5.5 Bats** There is no evidence of use of the roof-space above the kitchen extension by roosting bats, due to their inability to access the space. The terraced house is located in an urbanised part of Plympton St. Maurice, with restricted connectivity to green spaces that would provide good foraging.

**5.6 Badgers** No badgers would be affected by the proposed replacement of the kitchen extension's roof.

**5.7 Dormice** No dormice would be affected by the proposed replacement of the kitchen extension's roof, due to a total lack of suitable habitat.

**5.8 Reptiles & amphibians** No reptiles or amphibians would be affected by the proposed replacement of the kitchen extension's roof, due to a total lack of suitable habitat.

## 6 Provisions for biodiversity mitigation

**6.1** Given that replacement of kitchen extension's roof would have no measurable impact on habitats or biodiversity, the actual need for biodiversity mitigation is correspondingly very limited.

**6.2** It is, however, recommended that a suitable location should, if possible, be found on the top of the south-facing wall that fronts onto Longbrook Street for three external swift boxes, to be installed close to the eaves. The very small courtyard that runs with the house, provides no garden. However, provision could be made for the installation of say four nest boxes for native garden birds, in the garden that runs with the property. Bee hotels could also be provided in that area.

**6.3** There is scope in the small garden, for the planting of additional herbs and shrubs that are attractive to a range of beneficial insects.

## 7 Conclusions

**7.1** It is the author's professional opinion, that there are no ecological or habitat factors that would constrain the replacement of pitched-roof above the kitchen extension. The survey has shown that both bats and birds are unable to access any part of the roof-space above the extension.

**7.2** The survey has demonstrated that the habitat value of the kitchen extension and the small courtyard is extremely limited, so the actual need to provide biodiversity mitigation is correspondingly limited. However, it is considered that the provision of mitigation measures set out in **Sections 6.2 & 6.3** above, would provide an appropriate and measurable enhancement of biodiversity.

## 8 References

HMSO Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) –as amended

HMSO The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) - as amended

HMSO Habitats Directive (92/43/EC)

Gov. UK The National Planning and Policies Framework (2012) (revised July 2021. Section 180 a-e)

Gov. UK Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (2017)

Gov. UK The Environment Act (2021)

Gov. UK The Environmental Improvement Plan (2023)

HMSO Government Circular (ODPM 06/2005 & DEFRA 01/2005) *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation—Statutory Obligations and Their Impact within the Planning System*

British Standards Institution (2013) *BS42020 Biodiversity—A code of practice for planning and development*

Mitchell Jones A J. (2004) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines* English Nature

Andrew Salisbury *et al* (August 2015). *Enhancing gardens as habitats for flower-visiting aerial insects (pollinators): should we plant native or exotic species?*. Journal of Applied Ecology

**9 Appendices** (provided as separate files and not as an integral part of this Ecological Assessment)

1 Digital images

2 Devon County Council Wildlife Checklists

## Footnote

Research carried out by Andrew Salisbury, the Royal Horticultural Society's Principal Entomologist and colleagues, has demonstrated in a peer-reviewed paper *Enhancing gardens as habitats for flower-visiting aerial insects (pollinators): should we plant native or exotic species*, that gardens with a range of native, northern and southern hemisphere plants provide optimum nectar and pollen availability for insects that play a critically important role in pollinating crops and other flowering plants.