



# **PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT**

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**The Old Poor House, 7 Castle Banks, Lewes**

On behalf of: Asher Planning

<b>Client:</b>	Asher Planning			
<b>Project:</b>	The Old Poor House, 7 Castle Banks, Lewes			
<b>Reference:</b>	LLD3172-ECO-REP-001-00-PRA			
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**Validity:**

This report is valid for 18 months from the date of the site visit. If works have not commenced by this date, an updated site visit should be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist to assess any changes in the habitats present on site, and to inform a review of the conclusions and recommendations made.



# LIZARD

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## SUMMARY

Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology has been commissioned by Asher Planning to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of The Old Poor House, 7 Castle Banks, Lewes (located around central grid reference: *TQ 41415 10244* – hereafter referred to as ‘the site’). A site visit was completed on the 23rd of February 2024 to allow the presence or potential presence of a bat roost to be identified and to identify the need for further assessment prior to application, where required.

The site consisted of a small lean-to (Building B01) within a paved garden of a residential terraced dwelling. The lean-to proposed for demolition was assessed as having negligible – low potential to support roosting bats and negligible potential for wintering bats. The trees within the site boundary were assessed as having low/negligible potential for roosting bats, all potential roosting features were easily checked throughout, and no signs of bats were observed. The site is also unlikely to support foraging or commuting bats, due to its small size and lack of suitable resources.

To completely rule out the possibility of bats using the easily viewed few potential roosting features, a pre-commencement check by an ecologist utilising an endoscope is proposed to scope out the features, particularly the crevices on the stone walls on either side of the structure, to rule out any potential of roosting bats.

**Table No. 01 - Summary of Recommendations**

Ecological Receptor	Recommendations / Requirements	Time Constraint
Bats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building B01, assessed as negligible/low suitability and will require 1x survey visit to confirm the absence of a bat roost, using an endoscope.</li> <li>• All artificial lighting to conform to ILP Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night.</li> </ul>	Undertaken May-August

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology has been commissioned by Asher Planning to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of The Old Poor House, 7 Castle Banks, Lewes (located around central grid reference: TQ 41415 10244 – hereafter referred to as ‘the site’).
- 1.2 The purpose of this report has been to determine the presence or evaluate the likelihood of the presence of roosting bats on site and to determine the need for further bat surveys prior to application. This assessment has been undertaken with due consideration to existing best practice guidelines *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins, 2023).



Figure No. 1 – Site Habitat Plan. The site boundary is outlined in red. Lean-to (B01) structure outlined in blue.

**Site Information**

- 1.3 The survey area covers c. 75m<sup>2</sup> and consists of a small lean-to (B01) which is to be demolished and a paved garden attached to a terraced dwelling. The site is enclosed by residential buildings associated with Castle Banks to the north, south and west. To the east is Brack Mount, a grassland area with mature trees and vegetation.

**Surrounding Landscape**

- 1.4 The surrounding landscape to the west consists of allotments and a grassland play area. There are areas of woodland in the wider surrounding environment and the River Ouse runs approximately 0.5km from the northern and eastern boundaries. There are bodies of water approximately 0.3km from the northern and 0.6km from the southeastern boundaries. The surrounding habitat is considered to be suitable for a range of UK bat species including light tolerant species such as pipistrelle and noctules.

**Development Proposals**

- 1.5 It is understood that the proposals are for the demolition of the small lean-to on site with no impact on other habitats expected.

**Scope of the Assessment**

- 1.6 The aim of the Preliminary Roost Assessment has been to:
- Identify features that bats could use for access and roosting;
  - Assess the building for signs of current or previous bat presence, such as droppings or feeding remains;
  - Determine the actual or potential presence of bats in accordance with best practice criteria; and
  - Identify the need for further survey required to assess the potential impact of proposals and/or develop and appropriate mitigation strategy.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (*MAGIC*) was consulted for all designated sites within a practicable zone of influence of the site. This included Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), National Nature reserves (NNR) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within a 2.0km radius of the site, and international statutory designated sites including SAC's designated for their bat interest are present within 12.0km of the site, in accordance with recent guidance (SDNP, 2021).

2.1.2 *MAGIC* was also used to provide information on all Priority Habitats within a 2.0km radius of the site, and all records of granted European Protected Species Mitigation licences within a 1.0km radius of the site.

2.1.3 Given the quantum of development proposed and broad low ecological value of the site and the surrounding area, a local biological records centre search has not been provided. This is an approach in line with current guidance (CIEEM, 2020).

### 2.2 Field Survey

2.2.1 A Daytime Bat Walkover (DBW) survey was undertaken on the 23rd of February 2024 by a suitably experienced surveyor (Fleur Booth, Accredited Agent under Louise Barker, 2023-11422-CLS-BAT). Weather conditions were cold (c.9°C), with minimal wind (Beaufort Scale 1-2), 100% cloud cover and light rain.

2.2.2 The Daytime Bat Walkover (DBW) survey entailed a slow walkover of the site, during which time the surveyor identified any structures, trees and other features that could be suitable for bats to roost in, and any habitats which could be suitable for bats to commute, forage or swarm in.

2.2.3 During this survey any direct evidence of bats was searched for and recorded, such as grease marks, urine stains, bat droppings, feeding remains and dead / live bats. Furthermore, any structures or trees which offered features with the potential to support bats were noted. For trees this included the identification of features such as, but not limited to, cracks, crevices and holes naturally formed by trees. For structures this included the identification of features such as, but not limited to, slipped, missing or uneven tiles, gaps around the soffit / barge board, raised flashing.

## 2.3 Evaluation Criteria

2.3.1 All suitable bat habitat was assessed in accordance best practice criteria (Collins, 2023), which is outlined herein. During the survey all trees within and immediately adjacent to the site were assessed using the following criteria:

**Table No. 02 – Criteria for Assessing the Bat Roosting Suitability of Trees**

Suitability	Description
<b>None</b>	Either no potential roosting features in the tree, or highly unlikely to be any.
<b>FAR</b>	Further assessment required to establish if potential roosting features are present in the tree.
<b>PRF</b>	A tree with at least one potential roosting feature present.



2.3.2 Furthermore, all structures were assessed externally, and internally wherever possible for their potential to support bats, using the following criteria:

**Table No. 03 – Criteria for Assessing the Bat Roosting Suitability of Structures**

Potential Suitability	Description
<b>None</b>	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of year.
<b>Negligible</b>	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats. However, some small uncertainty remains, as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features occasionally.
<b>Low</b>	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of year. However, these do not provide enough shelter, space, protection, appropriate conditions or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats.
<b>Moderate</b>	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat, but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status, irrespective of species conservation status.
<b>High</b>	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat, with the potential to support high conservation status roosts irrespective of species conservation status.
<b>Confirmed</b>	Direct evidence of bats identified.

2.3.3 Finally, an assessment of the winter hibernation potential of the structures was made, in accordance with the following criteria:

**Table No. 04 – Criteria for Assessing the Winter Bat Roosting Suitability of Structures and Trees**

Potential Suitability	Description
<b>Low</b>	No or very limited potential winter roosting habitat
<b>Moderate</b>	Non classic site
<b>High</b>	'Classic sites', which offer stable humidity and consistent temperatures throughout the winter period, such as underground sites, cellars, tunnels etc.

## 2.4 Constraints and Limitations

- 2.4.1 No constraints or limitations were experienced during this survey; the structure was easily assessed externally and internally.

### 3.0 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 The following designated sites are not necessarily representative of the existing site's ecology but are indicative of the ecological context of the surrounding area; a factor that may be important when assessing the presence / absence potential of certain species groups. Statutory Designated Sites identified within a potential zone of influence of the site include:

**Table No. 05 – Statutory Designated Sites**

Site	Description	Location
<b>International Statutory Designated Sites within 12.0km</b>		
Lewes Downs SAC	Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites)</li> </ul>	1.3km E
Castle Hill SAC	Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites)</li> </ul> Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1654 Early gentian <i>Gentianella anglica</i></li> </ul>	5.0km SW
<b>National Statutory Designated Sites within 2.0km</b>		
Railway Land Lewes LNR	Former Railway goods yard and part of the site is a former formal garden. Wet willow woodland, open grassland, floodplain grazing meadows (and great drainage ditch network), a re-created reedbed, tidal chalk Winterbourne stream and other urban fringe habitats. Good range of bird, reptile, amphibian and mammal species including kingfishers, woodpeckers, kestrels, grass snakes, frogs, toads, newts etc.	0.5km SE

Site	Description	Location
Lewes Brooks SSSI	Located on the flood plain of the River Ouse, between Lewes and Southease, the Brooks support a wide diversity of invertebrates, with water beetles (Coleoptera) being particularly well represented. There are also several rare snails (Mollusca), flies (Diptera) and moths (Lepidoptera). The ditches which cut through the river alluvium on the floodplain vary in salinity from fresh spring fed ditches in the west, to brackish water adjacent to the tidal River Ouse. This variation together with the cyclical clearing of ditches produces a mosaic of habitats, which support a wide diversity of invertebrates	0.9km S
Offham Marshes SSSI	This alluvial grazing marsh supports large amphibian populations, a feature which is unusual for this type of habitat in Sussex. This is due to the close proximity of the breeding sites to the areas of suitable terrestrial habitat (woodland, scrub and fen) on the flood plain and the chalk escarpment. The site also supports several scarce dragonflies (Odonata), beetles (Coleoptera) and flies (Diptera).	1.1km NW
Southerham Works Pit SSSI	Primarily designated for its geological importance, this area has the thickest and most complete chalk sequence in southern England.	1.2km SE
Lewes Downs SSSI	Lewes Downs is an isolated block of downland which forms part of the South Downs. It is important for the extremely rich chalk grassland and scrub vegetation, which contains a number of southern and oceanic-southern species as well as a nationally rare orchid. The site also supports a rich invertebrate fauna including a rare moth, and an important breeding community of downland birds.	1.3km E
Southerham Grey Pit SSSI	Primarily designated for its geological importance, this area has the thickest and most complete chalk sequence in southern England.	1.5km SE

Site	Description	Location
Clayton to Offham Escarpment SSSI	This extensive site lies on the chalk escarpment and dip slope of the South Downs. The nationally uncommon chalk grassland habitat dominates much of the site but woodland and scrub is better represented here than on the other chalk sites in East Sussex. The site supports a rich community of breeding birds.	1.8km NW
Southerham Machine Bottom Pit SSSI	Primarily designated for its geological importance, this area has the thickest and most complete chalk sequence in southern England.	1.9km SE

- 3.1.2 This site is within the SSSI Impact Risk Zones of *the Offham Marches SSSI*, *the Lewes Brookes SSSI*, the *Southerham Works Pit SSSI*, the *Southerham Machine Bottom Pit SSSI*, the *Southerham Grey Pit SSSI* and the *Lewes Downes SSSI*. However, the proposed developments do not fall into the categories whereby consultation with Natural England by the LPA is required.

#### ***Non-Statutory Designated Areas***

- 3.1.3 The following non-statutory designated areas were identified within 2.0km of the site:

***Table No. 06 – Non-Statutory Designated Areas***

Site	Location
Railway Land Nature Reserve	0.5km SE
Lewes Cemetery	0.8km SW
Old Malling Farm	1.2km N
Offham Hill	1.9km NE

#### ***Priority Habitats***

- 3.1.4 In accordance with the MAGIC dataset, within 2.0km of the site there are priority habitats (NERC, 2006) *Lowland Calcareous Grassland*, *Lowland Meadows*, and *Deciduous Woodland*.

**Protected / Notable Species Records**

- 3.1.5 Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Leisler's *Nyctalus leisleri*, Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*, Natterer's *Myotis nattererii*, Daubenton's *Myotis daubentonii*, and Leisler's *Nyctalus leisleri*, bats have been recorded within 2.0km of the site area.

**European Protected Species Mitigation Licences Records**

- 3.1.6 1no. mitigation licence in relation to bats has been issued within 2.0km of the site, whereby a license was granted to destroy the destruction of a common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle resting place, 1.1km north-east of the site.

**3.2 Survey Results****Trees**

- 3.2.1 The two small trees within the paved garden were assessed as having no potential roosting features.

**Buildings**

- 3.2.2 The small lean-to was subject to an internal and external assessment.

**External Assessment**

- 3.2.3 The front of the built structure is made of softwood timber panelling which is in good condition and had no warping and so offered no potential roosting features (PRF). Brack Mount wall is the rear wall of the building and had no possible access for bats as it makes up the bank of earth behind the building. The southern side wall is made of bricks and flint. The northern side wall is made of bricks. Both side walls had crevices on the northern and southern facing aspects, as well as the western facing aspect where the brick joins the timber cladding. The roof is a single layer of overlapping clay roof tiles. The tiles are raised and uneven in places, however there is no loft space to offer a roosting feature. There were several holes under the eaves, within the timber structure that also provide a potential roost feature. No evidence such as grease markings or urine stains were found.

### *Internal Assessment*

- 3.2.4 The internal of the lean-to had an exposed roof rafter, with timber tile battens supporting the underside of the roof-tiles. The building was being used to store household and garden items which were checked for evidence of bat presence. There were many cobwebs throughout the structure which reflects the lack of suitability for roosting potential for bats. No other evidence of bats such as droppings or feeding remains (i.e. moth wings) were found. Small crevices where the lime mortar had crumbled away exist within the structure and may provide potential roosting opportunities for small species of bat such as pipistrelle.

### *Winter Roosting Potential*

- 3.2.5 The trees and buildings on site were also assessed as having no winter hibernation potential.

### *Foraging and Commuting Suitability*

- 3.2.6 The site itself was too small to provide a linear commuting route. However adjacent to the site is suitable foraging habitat by way of woodland. The surroundings are therefore considered to suitable for the majority of UK bat species, although the site itself offers negligible foraging and commuting suitability.

## 4.0 EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0.1 The following section provides recommendations to avoid, mitigate or compensate potential impacts to protected or notable species, in line with the 'Mitigation Hierarchy' (BSI, 2013; CIEEM, 2018). If potential impacts are anticipated, recommendations for further assessment and or mitigation are provided, to ensure that the presence, or potential presence of these species are adequately considered in the scheme design.

### 4.1 Potential Impacts

4.1.1 The small lean-to structure has been assessed as offering **negligible / low** bat roost suitability. As this building is proposed for demolition, in the absence of further assessment or mitigation it is not possible to scope out the potential that works could result in the killing or injuring of individual bats and permanent loss of a potential roost which would constitute an offence under the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) (as amended)* and the *Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended)*. This may result in adverse impacts to bats, significant at the site level.

### 4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 No trees on site were assessed as offering bat roost suitability so no further mitigation or compensation is required, in regard to these trees.

4.2.2 The lean-to shall require 1no. check prior to commencement of works using an endoscope by a licensed ecologist to further investigate the PRFs observed in the preliminary roost assessment. This survey is to be undertaken during the optimal survey season of May to August (Collins, 2023). This shall allow the presence or likely absence of a bat roost to be established. If an active bat roost is found, a European Protected Species Derogation Licence shall be required from Natural England to allow works to progress. Any mitigation measures required as part of any such licence would be determined by the results of the survey work.



- 4.2.3 Proposals should be mindful of the potential for bats to occur in the area by ensuring that boundary vegetation and habitat creation areas are protected from inappropriate nocturnal lighting, and by limiting the need for nocturnal lighting in the first instance. Any lighting plans should be assessed by a suitably qualified ecologist to advise on their accordance with best practice standards in regard to lighting and bats (BCT & ILP, 2023).

## 5.0 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT

5.1 There is a requirement laid out in national planning policy (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2023) that development should result in net gains for biodiversity. Furthermore, 10% calculable Biodiversity Net Gain is mandated by the *Environment Act (2021)*. Opportunities for ecological enhancements which could be incorporated into the scheme design are provided below:

- The use of seed and fruit bearing species of tree such as cherry, rowan, birch, hawthorn and crab apple to provide a foraging resource for birds and insects;
- Installation of bat and bird boxes to the southern aspect of mature trees;
- Pale and night-scented species to be used within the scheme to increase the bat foraging resource.

## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The site covered an area of c. 75m<sup>2</sup> and consisted of a small lean-to structure within a paved garden adjacent to a terraced residential dwelling.
- 6.2 The lean-to structure was identified as having negligible – low roosting potential. No further surveys were recommended. However, a pre-commencement check by an ecologist with an endoscope should be undertaken to rule out easily viewed PRFs ahead of any demolition works. No trees on site were identified as supporting bat roosting potential and therefore do not require further survey assessment.
- 6.3 The pre-commencement check should be conducted between May and September inclusive and undertaken in accordance with best practice guidance.
- 6.4 The site itself has minimal potential to act as a foraging resource or commuting route for bats, due to the lack of suitable vegetation and its small size. However, the surrounding wider landscape consisting of woodland, allotments, and grassland is likely to be suitable for the vast majority of UK species.
- 6.5 Opportunities for ecological enhancement are provided herein, to ensure proposals result in net gains for biodiversity. A series of recommendations are provided to ensure the scheme accords with best practice in regard to ecological receptors and complies with all local and national planning policy guidance and legislation. Overall, no constraints were identified which would preclude the provision of a scheme which is well designed, and sensitive to the presence, or potential presence of ecological receptors.

## 7.0 REFERENCES

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**Appendix A – Site Photographs**



**Image 01 – View of entire site north to south, with lean-to scheduled for demolition in centre of image, residential dwelling to the right of image.**



**Image 02 – View of historic flint wall.**





**Image 03 – View of front of B01, showing uneven and raised tiles, and timber cladding front.**



**Image 04 – View of PRF between brick side wall and front timber structure.**





**Image 05 – View of PRFs on northern facing aspect of lean-to structure.**



**Image 06 – View of interior of lean-to structure.**



**Image 07 – View of roof tiles from interior of lean-to structure.**