

Moor Farmhouse
Talatan
EX5 2 RF

**Protected Species Survey
& Ecological Appraisal**

For

Helen Watton & Morgan Bower

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Ecological Consultancy

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Written on 08.02.2024

Reference *MoorFarmhousePEA.doc*

Moor Farmhouse Talatón

Protected Species Ecological Appraisal

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1 The purpose and scope of the appraisal

1.1 The author has been commissioned by Helen Watton and Morgan Bower, to carry out an ecological survey of an annex to the farmhouse. The property is located within the southern outskirts of Talatón.

1.2 The specific purpose of the survey, which was carried out on the 7th February 2024, was to identify any opportunities for any protected species to roost or to nest within any parts of the existing extension. The exterior of the building and the roof-space were surveyed, carefully, to note any evidence of recent or past use by protected species. A number of digital images were taken during the survey and ten of those are used, as an appendix, to illustrate this report. A Devon County Council wildlife checklist has been populated.

1.3 Dr Peter Beale is the author of this report. He has been a consultant ecologist since 1990, having worked in a range of habitat management or ecologically related posts since 1964. These have included the post of Ecologist and Principal Planning Officer, within Devon County Council's Planning Department. Subsequent to that appointment, he became a Principal Lecturer and Head of Environmental Land Management at Seale-Hayne College. He has carried out numerous site surveys and ecological appraisals during the last thirty-three years. He holds a Diploma in Countryside Management (with Merit) and is actively involved in countryside and habitat management, in both a professional and a voluntary capacity.

2 Description of the property

2.1 The property, which would be affected by the proposal, is a single-storey extension under a pitched-roof, to which a flat-roofed flying extension was added, probably at a later age. The owners proposed to demolish both parts of the extension and to replace them with a two-storey extension to the main house.

2.2 No plants would be affected by the proposed reconfiguration of the farmhouse.

2.3 What became abundantly clear, as an outcome of the survey, is that replacement of the extension would have no ecologically measurable impacts. The building does not provide suitable opportunities for any protected mammals to roost or to nest. The impact on other wildlife of the recent presence for rats within the roof space, needs to be borne in mind.

3 Biodiversity and planning legislation

3.1 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 and subsequently. 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 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 and subsequently) 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 stood, such an obligation to provide BNG would not have been made 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. However, official introduction of BNG is has been delayed. There would be no habitat loss, so a BNG would not apply in this instance.

3.4 The author surveyed those parts of the building that would be affected by the proposal to replace it. That was done, in order to identify either the presence, or dependent use of the site, by any protected species. No protected mammals or birds were recorded during the survey, which was carried out on the 7th February 2024.

3.5 It would be unlawful to disturb any wild birds, their eggs or chicks while they are nesting. There was, however, no evidence on the 7th February of any nesting activity within any part of the building.

4 Data Searches

4.1 A data search by the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre has not been commissioned, because the proposal to replace the extension would have no impact of any significance on natural habitats or biodiversity. Nor would the proposed development, given its very limited scale, have an impact on any sites within the vicinity that have been designated or defined, in order to protect their wildlife value. A data search would not provide any information that would influence a planning decision, for the reason state above.

5 Summary of survey findings

The owners’ proposal to replace an extension with replacement accommodation, would have virtually no impact on natural habitats or on the adjoining garden.

5.1 Herbaceous plants No native or garden plants would be affected by the owners’ proposal to replace the existing extension.

5.2 Shrubs and hedges No shrubs or hedges would be affected by the owners' proposal to replace the existing extension.

5.3 Trees No trees would be affected by the owners' proposal to replace the existing extension.

5.4 Nesting birds No bird nesting activity would be affected by the owners' proposal to replace the existing extension.

5.5 Bats No bat roosting would be affected by the owners' proposal to replace the existing extension. Foraging activity would be equally unaffected.

5.6 Badgers No badgers would be affected by the owners' proposal to replace the existing extension.

5.7 Dormice No dormice would be affected by the owners' proposal to replace the existing extension.

5.8 Reptiles and amphibians No reptiles or amphibians would be affected by the owners' proposal to replace the existing extension.

5.9 Streams, ponds and wetlands No streams, ponds or wetlands would be affected by the owners' proposal to replace the existing extension.

6 Recommendations for additional survey work

The survey that was carried out on the 7th February 2024, has demonstrated that the extension that would be removed, to enable the construction of alternative accommodation, has no habitat value for any native wildlife, other than spiders. It does not provide a roost site for any bats or a nest site for any birds. It is the author's professional opinion, based on many years of relevant experience, that no additional ecological or habitat surveys would be required.

7 Provisions for biodiversity mitigation

7.1 The building that would be affected by the proposal to replace the extension, does not provide suitable opportunities for any protected species to roost, or birds to nest.

7.2 It is recommended that provision should be made for the installation of two boxes for crevice roosting bats, under the eaves of the eastern side of the house.

7.3 It would be appropriate for a range of four x hole and open-fronted nest boxes to be installed on the outside of the new extension or on the outside of other buildings. The possibility of providing swallow nest cups under the eaves of a building should also be considered. The installation of any nest boxes or cups would be a bonus.

7.4 The garden that runs with the property may provide opportunities for the planting of a range of flowering trees, shrubs and herbs, which provide nectar and pollen for a wide range of beneficial insects. Such plantings would enhance the habitat and biodiversity value of the land that runs with the property.

7.6 The owners of the property have indicated that advice would be appreciated, as to how best to enhance the habitat and biodiversity of the developed and undeveloped areas within the holding.

8 Conclusions

8.1 It is the author's professional opinion, based on the recent site visit, combined with over thirty years of appropriate experience as a consultant ecologist, that there are no ecological or habitat factors that would constrain the owner's plans to replace the existing extension.

8.2 The provision of bat-roost and nest-box facilities would demonstrate a measurable enhancement in biodiversity, in line with obligations set out within the NPPF.

8.3 There would be no loss of natural habitat, so a Biodiversity Net Gain calculation should not be required for this particular development.

9 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)

HMSO Protection of Badgers Act (1992)

HMSO Hedgerow Regulations (1997)

Gov. UK The National Planning and Policies Framework (2012) (revised July 2021 and 2023)

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*

CIEEM *Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing* Technical Guidance Series (2016 as revised)

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

Collins J. (ed) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines*, 3rd edition, Bat Conservation Trust, London

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

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

1 Digital images

2 Devon County Council wildlife checklist

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.

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