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Phase 1 bat and nesting bird survey report

Site: 24 Woolbrook Park,
Sidmouth,
Devon,
EX10 9DU

For: Mr. M. Sykes

Report
prepared by: Richard Bates, ACIEEM, BSc(Hons).

March 2024

	Name	Date	Signature
Report prepared by:	Richard Bates, BSc ACIEEM	23.03.24	[redacted]

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PLEASE NOTE: The contents of this report are based on the latest survey data. Should a period of more than 12 months pass between the issuing of this report and work commencing on a project, an update survey of the site may be required.

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Reference Number: DCE1672

Contents

Devon Wildlife Checklist

A.1 Protected and priority species (relates to question 13a in the planning application form).

Location: 24 Woolbrook Park, Sidmouth Grid reference for centre of site (6 digit): SY 120 890 Planning Application reference: N/A

Name of surveyor and consultancy: Date that surveys carried out: 13th March 2024 Sent to DBRC: N

Richard Bates – Devon & Cornwall Ecology

Species - terrestrial, intertidal, marine	Walkover shows that suitable habitat present and reasonably likely that the species will be found? Tick or cross	Detailed survey needed to clarify impacts and mitigation requirements?	Detailed survey carried out and included?	Species Present or Assumed to be present on site Indicate with P or A and name the species	Impact on species?	Detailed Conservation Action Statement included? Sets out actions needed in relation to avoidance / mitigation / compensation / enhancement	EPS offence committed? Three tests met?	Grid reference for specific location of species (if required for large sites)
Bats (roost)	×							
Bats (flight line / foraging habitat)		×	×	A – Common bat species	Potential disturbance through artificial lighting		-	-
Dormice	×							
Otters	×							
Great crested newts (*check consultation zone)	×							
Cirl buntings (*check consultation zone)	×							
Barn owls	×							
Other Schedule 1 birds	×							
Breeding birds	×							
Reptiles	×							
Native crayfish	×							
Water voles	×							
Badgers	×							
Other protected species	×							
UK BAP priority species	×							
Devon BAP key species	×							
Invasive species	×							

A.2 Designations / important habitats / sites of geological importance (relates to questions 13 b & c in the planning application form)

Designation Terrestrial, intertidal, marine	Within site or potential impact. Tick or cross	Name of site / habitat	Detailed Conservation Action Statement included in report?	Habitat balance sheet included (showing area of habitats lost, gained and overall net gain)	Relevant organisation consulted & response included in the application?
Statutory designations			Sufficient information included in order for the LPA to undertake an HRA?		
European designations - Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and RAMSAR site or within Greater Horseshoe consultation zone		Within zone of influence of East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC			The proposed development is for the renovation of an existing residential unit. No impacts are predicted through vectors such as increased visitor numbers, disturbance or groundwater pollution.
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	×				
Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)	×				
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	×				
Non statutory wildlife designations					
County Wildlife Site (CWS)	×				
Ancient woodland	×				
Special Verge	×				
UK BAP Priority habitat	×				
Local Biodiversity Network (mapped by Devon Wildlife Trust / through Green Infrastructure work)	×				
Non statutory geological designation					
County Geological Site (CGS or RIGS)	×				

Executive Summary

Survey date:	13th March 2024
Location:	24 Woolbrook Park, Sidmouth, Devon EX10 9DU
Grid Reference:	SY 12082 89045
Surveyor:	Richard Bates, ACIEEM BSc, bat licence ref: 2017-30400-CLS-CLS

Devon and Cornwall Ecology was commissioned to undertake a phase 1 bat survey of a residential property on behalf of the client, Mr. M. Sykes, at 24 Woolbrook Park, Sidmouth. The survey was undertaken to support a planning application to modify and extend the building. This process will include re-roofing the structure.

A full internal and external inspection of the building was conducted on the 13th March 2024, looking for signs of use by bats and/or nesting birds. The survey was conducted in suitable weather conditions and in line with guidance available in Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins et al, 2023).

The survey identified very limited potential for bats on the building exterior and no internal evidence of bats. No further survey work is required, but simple precautions have been included in section 5 to minimise any risk to bats should they be present.

The site boundaries were assessed as having negligible to low to moderate potential to support foraging and commuting bats. The proposed development will not significantly impact on these features but is likely to include additional artificial lighting. Recommendations have been included in section 5 as a precautionary approach to minimise any potential disturbance to bats.

No nesting birds were recorded and no further survey work is required regarding birds.

1. Introduction

Devon & Cornwall Ecology were commissioned to undertake an initial phase 1 bat and nesting bird survey of a residential property at 24 Woolbrook Park, Sidmouth. The survey was undertaken to support a planning application to renovate and extend the property. This will include re-roofing the property. The survey was undertaken by Ecologist Richard Bates BSc (Hons) who is a field ecologist and consultant with 12 years experience and a licence to survey for bats (2017-30400-CLS-CLS, Level 2). Subject to a Professional Code of Conduct, Richard is an Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

The site is under the ownership of the client, Mr. M. Sykes, and is located in a suburbanised setting in the town of Sidmouth. In its immediate setting the site is bordered by residential properties in all directions.

In the wider landscape the site is located in an environment that is generally unfavourable for bats. The urban development of Sidmouth surrounds the site, with further buildings and a network of urban roads extending over 1km to the north and east and 250m to the south and west. These features present a significant barrier for most bat species, with foraging and commuting opportunities mostly restricted to residential gardens and individual trees. Beyond these barriers, however, the wider landscape has a mix of agricultural fields, open grounds and woodland, particularly to the west. These are likely to provide good opportunities for many bat species, but access to them is difficult due to the widespread presence of artificial lighting. Overall, the site has poor connectivity to this wider landscape and any local populations are likely to be limited to small numbers of common species.

Wider landscape view of 24 Woolbrook Park (Google Earth Pro).	Approximate site location

Site layout of 24 Woolbrook Park (Google Earth Pro).	Approximate outline of existing building.

Proposed development at 24 Woolbrook Park, Sidmouth	

2. Species records and desktop survey

A data search of records from the local biological records centre has not been undertaken for this site. The phase 1 survey had identified negligible bat potential within the proposed work areas. It is considered unlikely that the proposed development will impact on bats or their roosts. It is therefore considered unlikely that a search of local records will provide any further actionable information.

However, a search of publicly available records returned instances of common pipistrelle (Pipistrellus pipistrellus), soprano pipistrelle (Pipistrellus pygmaeus), brown long-eared (Plecotus auritus) and lesser horseshoe (Rhinolophus hipposideros) bats within 2km of the site. A search of granted European Protected Species licences (through the Natural England Magic Map website) returned three records of bat licences being issued within 2km of the site. These licences were issued for a roost comprising common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and lesser horseshoe bats. One of the licences was issued for works affecting a maternity colony of soprano pipistrelles.

3. Methodology

Equipment

- Camera
- Binoculars
- Ladder
- Endoscope

The bat survey consisted of a full internal and external inspection of the building due to be affected by the proposed works. The survey method consisted of searching for evidence of bats, including bat droppings, corpses, scratch marks, urine staining, grease marks and clean cobweb free areas. Particular attention was paid around potential access points, attic spaces (where accessible) and crevice roosting features within each structure and on its outside. Binoculars were used to assess potential crevice features. Bats do make audible squeaks and these were listened out for by the surveyor during the survey. The methodology used to search this site is consistent with the guidelines provided in the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins et al, 2023). The building was assessed for their potential to support roosting bats based on the criteria set out in Table 1 below:

Table 1 - Criteria for assessing bat roosting potential of buildings and trees

Confirmed Roost	Evidence of bat occupation found, including live bats, droppings, corpses, grease and/or scratch marks and urine staining.
High Roosting Potential	Buildings or trees with significant roosting potential, either because they contain a large number of suitable features or the features present appear optimal due to their size, shelter, conditions and surrounding habitat.
Moderate Roosting Potential	Buildings or trees with one or more potential roosting features that may be used by bats but are unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
Low Roosting Potential	Buildings or trees with few features that may be used opportunistically by bats but are unlikely to be used on a regular basis due to the size, location, conditions and/or suitability of nearby habitat.
Negligible Roosting Potential	Buildings and trees with negligible suitable features and poor quality surroundings.

The site was also assessed for potential to support commuting and foraging bats, based on the criteria set out in Table 2 below, adapted from the Good Practice Guidelines (Collins et al, 2023):

Table 2 - Criteria for assessing bat commuting and foraging habitats

Suitability	Description of habitats
Negligible	Negligible commuting features on site and/or unsuitable foraging features, such as large areas of hardstanding.
Low	Habitats that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats, such as gappy hedgerows or sites with limited connectivity to the wider landscape. Suitable but isolated foraging habitat that could be used by small numbers of bats, such as small patches of scrub or lone trees.
Moderate	Continuous commuting habitats connected to the wider landscape, such as a line of trees and scrub or linked residential gardens. Habitat that can be used for foraging and is connected to the wider landscape, such as trees, scrub, grassland and water.
High	Continuous, high quality habitat with good connectivity to the wider landscape. This would include features such as watercourses, river valleys, hedgerows and woodland edges. High quality foraging habitat that well connected to the wider landscape and likely to be used regularly by bats, such as broadleaved woodland, tree lined watercourses, grazed parkland or sites that are close to and/or connected to known roosts.

A summary of legislation relating to bats can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

4. Results

4.1 Bats and nesting birds – residential building B1

The survey noted the following about the building:

Photograph 1– View of the south aspect of the building.

External

The building is an irregularly shaped brick and breezeblock residence with a hipped roof.

The irregularly shaped roof has concrete interlocking tiles. These are in very good condition; one small gap was noted beneath just one roof tile.

Concrete ridge tiles are present and in good condition. No gaps were noted beneath the ridges.

The edge roof tiles meet with uPVC guttering and as such have no suitable gaps beneath them. In addition, the guttering is in mostly good condition with no gaps behind or beneath the guttering.

Wooden soffits are present. They are mostly in good condition with one gnawed hole on the south noted and one knothole in the north access noted. Until recently the hole on the north aspect has been obscured by vegetation and the gnawed hole is partially blocked by guttering. This hole could be closely inspected from ground level and no signs of bats were noted. Neither is considered to have significant potential for bats.

A mix of wooden and uPVC windows and doors are present. These are in relatively good condition with no gaps around frames.

One chimney is present and well sealed. No potential crevices were noted.

An in-built garage is present beneath the main residence. This has a large metal door, a wooden door and a wooden window. All doors and windows are well sealed with no gaps around the frames.

The garage interior is well illuminated from the window. It has a boarded ceiling with no potential roosting features, such as rafters and beams. No suitable crevice features were found inside the garage either.

A full external survey noted only a small number of features with limited potential for bats. Given the limited features and the site location in an urban area, it is not considered proportional to conduct further surveys. Rather, recommendations have been made in section 5 for the careful dismantling of the identified areas.

Photograph 2– Example view of the void interior.

Internal

The building has a single, irregularly shaped void space that was fully accessible.

It varies in height with the tallest area being approximately 3m.

The void has a traditional structure with a ridge beam and purlin supports. Additional diagonal supports are also present but do not create a cluttered flight space.

The ridge beam and hips are clean with a light cobwebbing. No signs of use by bats were noted along the ridge or at the hip joints.

One ventilation pipe is present in the ridge line. This is open to the exterior but is cobwebbed throughout.

Bituminous felt is present beneath the roof tiles. This is in good condition with no gaps or holes noted.

No insulation is present in the void. Many mouse droppings were noted throughout the void.

Small areas of light were noted along the eaves on the north side. This is likely to coincide with the hole noted in the soffit. However, a full search of the void found no bat droppings on the floor or beams. It is considered likely the identified access point has been created by mice and the void inhabited by them. No signs of use by bats was recorded.

Survey Constraints

No significant constraints were noted during the survey.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Bats

The phase 1 survey recorded very limited potential for bats externally and no evidence of bats internally. As such no further survey work is required. However, bats do move around regularly and can adopt new roosts. Although it is unlikely that bats will adopt any features on this building, a simple precautionary approach will be undertaken:

Any roof tiles and ridge tiles affected by the works will be removed by lifting them carefully from the batons. The tiles will not be slid from the roof as this can cause accidentally crushing injuries if bats are present. The reverse side of all tiles will be inspected to ensure no bats are present. Should bats be encountered during this process, all work will cease immediately and a licensed ecologist will be consulted.

All bargeboards and soffits will be carefully removed using hand tools. The reverse side of all lengths of fascia will be checked for bats before being lowered to ground level.

If a bat is discovered during any other works at the site, all works will cease immediately and a licensed ecologist will be consulted. This advice may include leaving the bat to disperse of its own accord or waiting for the licensed handler to arrive and move the bat. Builders and contractors are explicitly forbidden from handling bats.

5.2 Bats – Foraging and commuting

Bats are sensitive to artificial lighting, which can draw insect prey away from potential foraging areas while simultaneously discouraging bats from foraging and disrupting commuting routes. Currently a lighting plan is unavailable for the development. However, in order to preserve commuting and foraging opportunities, all new exterior lighting will incorporate the following (where applicable) to minimise the potential for light disturbance:

Work on site will be limited to daylight hours only. No artificial use of lighting will be used for the proposed re-roofing during the hours of darkness.

External lighting used to illuminate any building entrances will use motion sensors. The use of sensors will reduce the amount of time the lights are on to only when needed.

All external lights will be angled downwards and away from the site boundaries. The spread of light from these sources will be minimised by using hoods or cowls to limit light spill to below the horizontal, in line with guidance available in Landscape and urban design for bats and biodiversity (Gunnel, Grant, & Williams, 2012).

Any required footpath lighting will consist of ground level bollard-style lighting or poll mounted lighting where an incorporated hood will direct the light downwards and away from the nearby foliage and commuting features. For either design, lighting will be restricted to providing 3 lux or less at ground level, in line with guidance available in Bats and Lighting in the UK: Bats and the Built Environment Series (Bat Conservation Trust, 2008).

Where available, external lighting will incorporate LED luminaires or narrow spectrum bulbs that emit minimal ultra-violet light, as recommended in guidance from the Bat Conservation Trust & Institute of Lighting Professionals (2018) and the Bat Conservation Trust (2008) respectively. This will avoid attracting insects to lit areas, maintaining the availability of those insects for foraging bats.

5.3 Site enhancements

As part of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019), local planning authorities aim to secure enhancements for biodiversity for all developments. To achieve this aim the following will be incorporated into the design proposals for this site. Illustrative examples for these enhancements are available in Appendix 3:

Provision should be made for pollinating insects on site. A number of commercial products are available to 'house' important pollinators such as solitary bee and solitary wasp species. A minimum of one suitable product should be included to provide nesting opportunities. These may be free standing, attached to trees or installed on buildings. The provision of nesting opportunities for pollinators will be of benefit to a range of important insect species, the plants they pollinate and the mammals and birds that prey on them.

A minimum of one Schwegler brick nest boxes, or other suitable tree/building mounted bird box, should be installed at the site. The box will be positioned as high as possible on the wall or tree, a minimum of 3m from ground level. The boxes should also be located on a north facing aspect out of the prevailing wind and strong sunlight. The addition of bird boxes will provide nesting opportunities for common bird species.

6. References

Bat Conservation Trust (2008). Bats and Lighting in the UK: Bats and the Built Environment Series. Bat Conservation Trust.

Bat Conservation Trust & Institute of Lighting Professionals (2018). Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK. https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting

Collins, J., Charleston, P., Davidson-Watts, I., Markham, S. and Kerslake, L. (2023). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition). Bat Conservation Trust, London.

East Devon District Council (2017). East Devon District Council – Habitat Mitigation Contributions. Accessed online 15.03.24, available at https://eastdevon.gov.uk/media/2095279/plg_eeph10kzones-1.pdf

Gunnel, K., Grant, G., and Williams, C., (2012). Landscape and urban design for bats and biodiversity. Bat Conservation Trust.

Natural England (2020). Magic Map. Available at:
http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/MagicMap.aspx [Accessed 23.03.24]

Appendix 1: Legislation (summary)

Wildlife Protection legislation

This appendix details the legislation relevant to the protection of species and habitats. It also details the relevant policies within national, regional, and local planning policy.

National Planning Policy Framework (2018)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is the Government's vision for biodiversity in England and is considered by local councils during all planning applications where development is proposed. The NPPF has a broad aim that any construction, development or regeneration proposals should maintain and enhance biodiversity, with the aim of securing biodiversity enhancements for all developments in order to facilitate sustainable development.

Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs): BAPs set out policy for protecting and restoring priority species and habitats as part of the UK's response as signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity. BAPs operate at both a national and local level with priority species and habitats identified at a national level and a series of Local BAPs that identify ecological features of particular importance to a particular area of the country. The requirement to consider and contribute towards BAP targets was strengthened through the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000. Although now superseded by other legislation, the lists drawn up under the BAPs are still valuable reference sources on local and national wildlife priorities.

Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006)
The NERC Act 2006 amends the above mentioned CRoW Act, obliging local authorities to include biodiversity considerations in their duties, including in consideration of planning applications. Under Section 41 of the Act, this consideration is based on lists of organisms and habitat types deemed to be of principal importance to in conserving biodiversity. These lists are primarily based on lists created for the UK and local authority BAPs.

Mammals:

Otters, dormice, water voles, and all bat species are fully protected under section 9 (5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). According to this act it is an offence to:

- Intentionally capture, kill or injure one of these animals
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used by one of these animals for shelter or protection
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb an animal whilst it is using this place
- sell, offer for sale or advertise for one of these animals live or dead

Designated as European Protected Species' otters, dormice, and all bat species receive additional protection from the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, under Schedule 2 which implements the EC Directive 92/43/EEC in the United Kingdom. In accordance with this act, it is an offence to:

- Deliberately capture or kill a European Protected Species

Deliberately disturb a European Protected Species
Damage or destroy the breeding site or resting place of a European Protected Species

The greater and lesser horseshoe bats, barbastelle and bechstein's bats, are also listed under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations. Areas which support populations of these species can therefore be considered for designation as a Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

Birds:

Please Note: All breeding birds and their nests are protected under the general protection of Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 as amended. This makes it an offence to disturb breeding birds.

Appendix 2: Additional Site Photographs

Photograph 1 – View of the north aspect.

Photograph 2 – View of the west aspect.

Photograph 3 – View of the hole in soffit beneath guttering.

Photograph 4 – View of the garage interior.

Photograph 5 – Example view of the pipe in the ridge.

Photograph 6 – Additional view of void floor.

Appendix 3: Examples of suitable site enhancement measures

Schwegler 2F Schwegler 1FF

Examples of tree or wall mounted bat boxes. Box should comprise one Schwegler 2F or Schwegler 1FF bat box to provide suitable roosting site for multiple bat species.

Schwegler 2FR

Example of Schwegler 2FR bat tube, designed to be incorporated into wall. To be installed on this aspect for protection from artificial light sources and prevailing wind. Requires no maintenance and can be painted/rendered.

For either design, box should be located a minimum of 3m from ground level and with a clear, uncluttered flight path to the box entrances. Boxes must not be illuminated from any nearby artificial lighting.