Fenswood Ecology

Thorne Whitegate, Long Ashton
Preliminary Roost Assessment
March 2024

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Summary

Fenswood Ecology was commissioned by Mr Charlie Gamlen, to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (RPA) of Thorne Whitegate, Long Ashton (centred around Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: ST 51373 69823). An assessment of the site was undertaken by Fenswood Ecology in March 2024.

An assessment was completed on the two-storey dwelling, which has two distinct roof voids. It is proposed that the building be extended at the eastern end to the north, a new single storey green roofed garage is also planned for the western end of the building.

The building has no visible bat roosting features from ground level but small amounts of historic bat droppings were found in roof Void B. Therefore, the building is considered to have negligible bat roost potential in roof Void A and low bat roost potential but is a confirmed roost in roof Void B.

Due to the limited numbers of bat droppings (<20) and the age of the droppings, it is considered that the building has only been used for a short period of time by small numbers (possibly individual) bats.

Roof Void A and Void B although are connected, are completely separate and there is no internal connection between the two voids. Current plans for the building do not include any works to roof Void B and only limited works to Void A, which will consist of tying in the new extension to the existing structure. The construction of the new garage at the front of the building will not affect either roof void.

It is therefore considered appropriate that the extension to the building can be completed under a precautionary method of works, which will detail the method of works when adding the extension.

Introduction

Fenswood Ecology was commissioned by Mr Charlie Gamlen, to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (RPA) of Thorne Whitegate, Long Ashton (centred around Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: ST 51373 69823). An assessment of the site was undertaken by Fenswood Ecology in March 2024.

Bats are protected and considered to be of primary importance under UK legislation, namely the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

This report details the findings of the survey work, methodologies employed are described including site surveys and evaluation and the need for any further

survey work and/or mitigation measures are included, where appropriate.

Site Location

Thorne Whitegate is situated on the outskirts of the village of Long Ashton, North Somerset. The village is surrounded by open countryside comprising mainly arable and pasture-land divided by a matrix of treelines and hedgerows. There are scattered waterbodies and areas of woodland throughout the wider landscape.

Figure 1: MAGIC map showing surrounding landscape in relation to the survey site

Project Overview

The proposal for the site is to extend the eastern end of the property on the front elevation and to create a new green roofed garage on the western end of the front elevation.

Methodology

Desk Study

Records held on Magic.gov.uk on Designated Sites and granted European Protected Species Licences were reviewed in March 2024.

Field Study

The survey was undertaken by Fenswood Ecology on 2nd March 2024.

The dwelling at Thorne Whitegate was inspected to assess its potential to support roosting bats, in accordance with current best practice guidelines (Collins, 2023).

An internal and external inspection of the buildings on site was undertaken during daylight to determine the suitability for bats and establish if bats are using the building or have been using the building in the past.

All accessible parts of the buildings were inspected, to look for bats and signs of the presence of bats, including:

- Droppings.
- Feeding remains including moth and butterfly wings.
- Staining from urine or oils near crevices or holes or on timber (such as roof beams), walls, chimney breasts etc.
- Scratch marks on walls and timber.
- Squeaking or chattering calls.

The systematic search inside the buildings included inspection of the ceiling, walls, floors and surfaces. Potential access into the building was also inspected by searching for holes in walls, the roof and any light penetration into the interior from the outside.

The assessment outside the buildings included inspection of all walls, windows, windowsills, including a search for any crevices under roofing sheets, missing mortar, gaps in the gable end of the roof, and any other potential bat roost opportunities.

A building may have several features of potential interest to roosting bats. It is not always possible to confirm usage of a feature by bats as often the animals may be present on one day and no evidence of occupation may be found on the next. Consequently, it is normal practice when undertaking such surveys to assign each feature to a defined category of roosting potential as follows:

Negligible: Negligible habitat features onsite likely to be used by roosting bats

Low: A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or

suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation.)

Moderate: 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 (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed)

High: 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

Confirmed: This category is used where positive evidence of bats usage has been recorded from a feature. For example, bats or bat droppings may be present, or existing bat records may be associated with the feature. A licence from Natural England is likely to be required if the bat roost is to be disturbed by the development.

Whilst completing the survey for bats the opportunity was taken to systematically search for birds nests and other evidence of occupation such as:

- Droppings/ white washing
- Pellets
- Feathers
- Egg shells
- Feeding remains

Limitations to Survey

Access to the full application site was provided.

The survey was undertaken within the optimal survey season and it is considered that a robust evaluation of bat roosting potential within the site character has been made.

Findings and Evaluation

Designated Sites

There are no designated site within 2km of the proposed site, however the site is situated in Zone C of the North Somerset & Mendip Bat Consultation Zone.

See appendix for designated site locations.

European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) Licences

There are four records of granted European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) Licences for bats shown on MAGIC within 2km of the site.

Case Reference	Species	Start of Licence	End of Licence	Distance from Site	Impact
2014-5344-EPS-BDX	Brown long eared	01/04/2015	30/04/2015	900m SW	Damage & destruction of a breeding site
2014-864-EPS-MIT	Lesser horseshoe	03/02/2014	03/09/2015	1.4km NW	Damage & destruction of a resting place & breeding site
2014-1102-EPS-MIT	Brown long eared	01/07/2014	01/10/2016	1.8km NW	Destruction of a resting place
EPSM2009-853	Common & soprano pipistrelle, greater & lesser horseshoe, brown long eared, serotine, Brandt's and whiskered	18/05/2009	18/05/2009	1.9km NW	Destruction of a resting place & breeding site

See appendix for EPSM licence locations

Field Survey

Preliminary Roost Appraisal

The dwelling is fairly modern and well-maintained two-storey building with a rendered finish and a pitched tiled roof. The roof is split into two self-contained loft voids, one on a north – south (Void A) orientation and one on an east – west (Void B) orientation. The tiles, soffits, facia-boards and roof drianage were all in good condition and showed no sign of slippage, damaged or disrepair.

The roof voids were well insulated and were both lined with a synthetic roof liner. Void A showed no light penetration from outside and Void B only showed one small area of light penetration.

No evidence of bats were found in Void A but a small number (<20) of very old bat dropping were found below the area of light penetraion in Void B. Samples of the droppings were taken and sent for DNA analysis to Ecotype Genetics Ltd (on 3rd March 2024), which showed that both soprano pipestrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*) bats had used the void.

No evidence was found of nesting birds and no potential nesting sites were identified and therefore this will not be mentioned again in this report.

Figure 2. Roof Void & Droppings Location Map

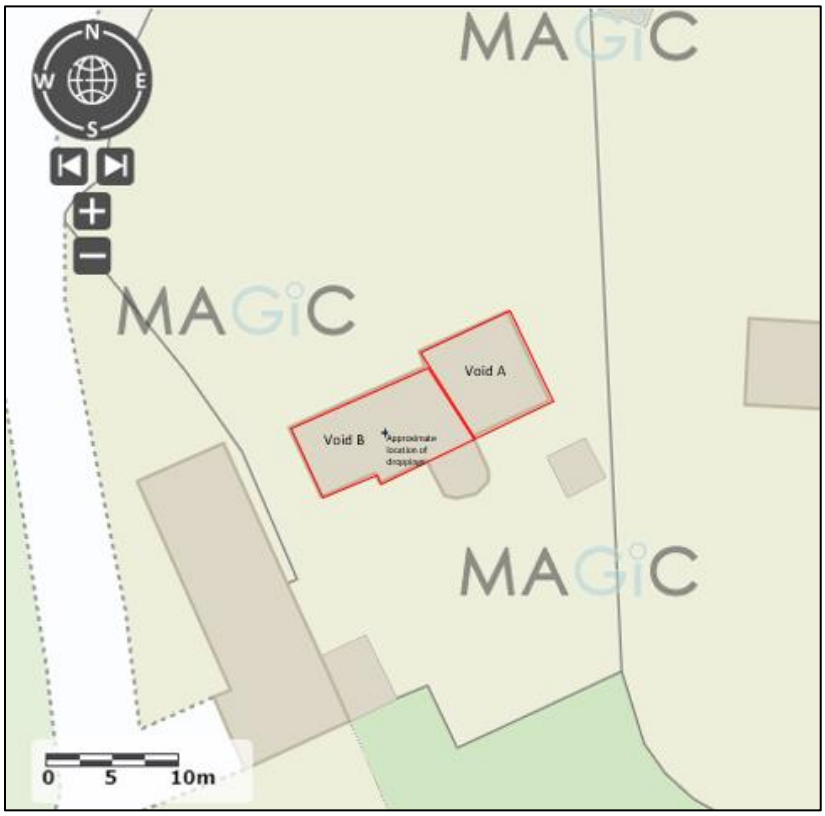

Photo 1. Front of the dwelling looking south east

Photo 2. Rear of the dwelling looking north east

Photo 3. Eastern elevation of the dwelling

Photo 4. Western elevation of the dwelling

Photo 5. Internal roof space - Void A

Photo 6. Internal roof space – Void B

Photo 7. Example of droppings in Void B

Photo 8. Gap in roof lining where light penetration occurred – Void B.

Conclusion & Recommendations

The building has no visible bat roosting features from ground level but small amounts of historic bat droppings were found in roof Void B. Therefore, the building is considered to have negligible roost potential for roof Void A and low bat roost potential but is a confirmed roost in roof Void B.

Due to the limited numbers of bat droppings (<20) and the age of the droppings, it is considered that the building has only been used for a short period of time by small numbers (possibly individual) bats.

Roof Void A and Void B although are connected, are completely separate and there is no internal connection between the two voids. Current plans for the building do not include any works to roof Void B and only limited works to Void A, which will consist of tying in the new extension to the existing structure. The construction of the new garage at the front of the building will not affect either roof void.

It is therefore considered appropriate that the extension to the building can be completed under a precautionary method of works, which will detail how the works must be completed and will include:

- Pre-construction inspection of both roof voids;
- A toolbox talk will be provided by a suitably experienced ecologist;
- Retention of roof Void B, with no works to be undertaken in this area;
- The proposed works for the extension will avoid the main bat

hibernation period (November to February inclusive). If this is not possible, works will only be undertaken after suitable weather conditions;
- Soft demolition techniques will be adopted during works to roof Void A
- Procedure for unexpectedly encountering bats during the works;
- Avoidance of new external lighting, or design of a bat sensitive lighting scheme if necessary.

If a bat or evidence of bats is unexpectedly discovered, all works must stop and the site ecologist contacted, who will provide further advice on how to proceed with the works appropriately, and whether a Natural England Bat Mitigation Licence is necessary.

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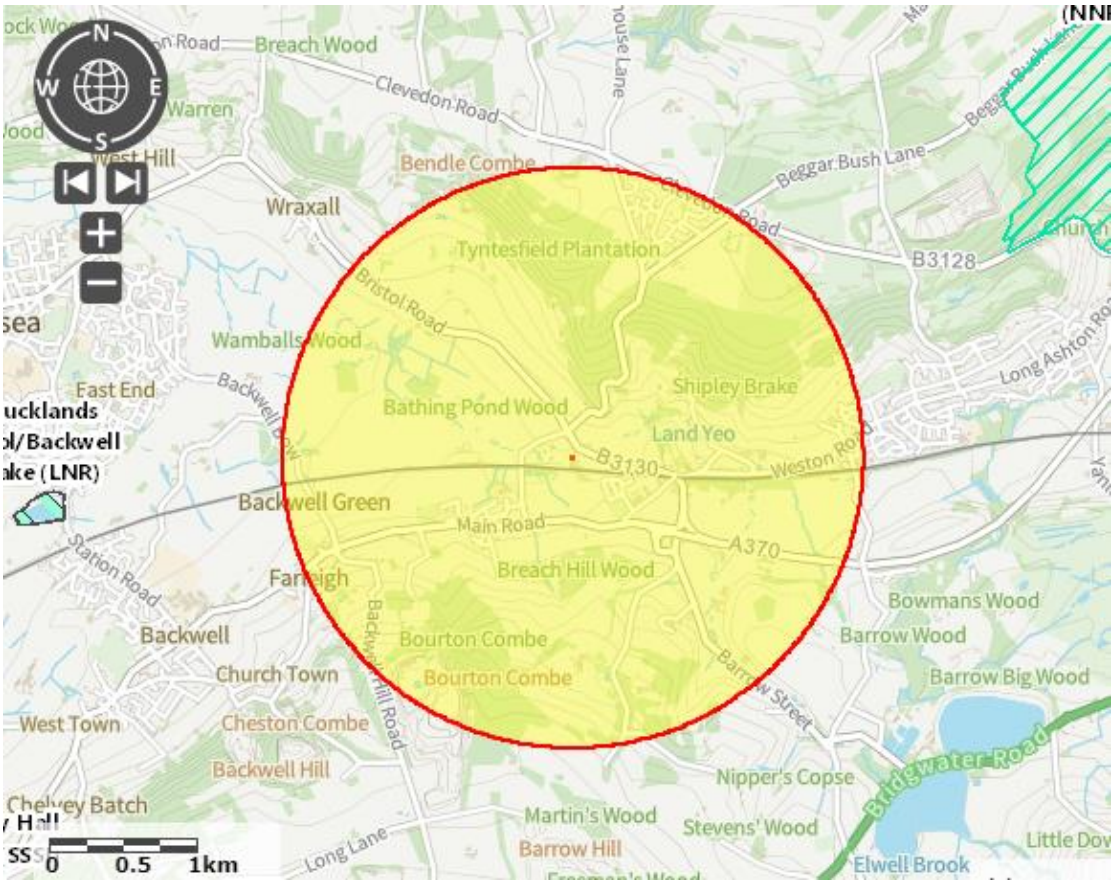
References

Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn.)*. Bat Conservation Trust, London

Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC), http://magic.defra.gov.uk
accessed March 2024

Appendix

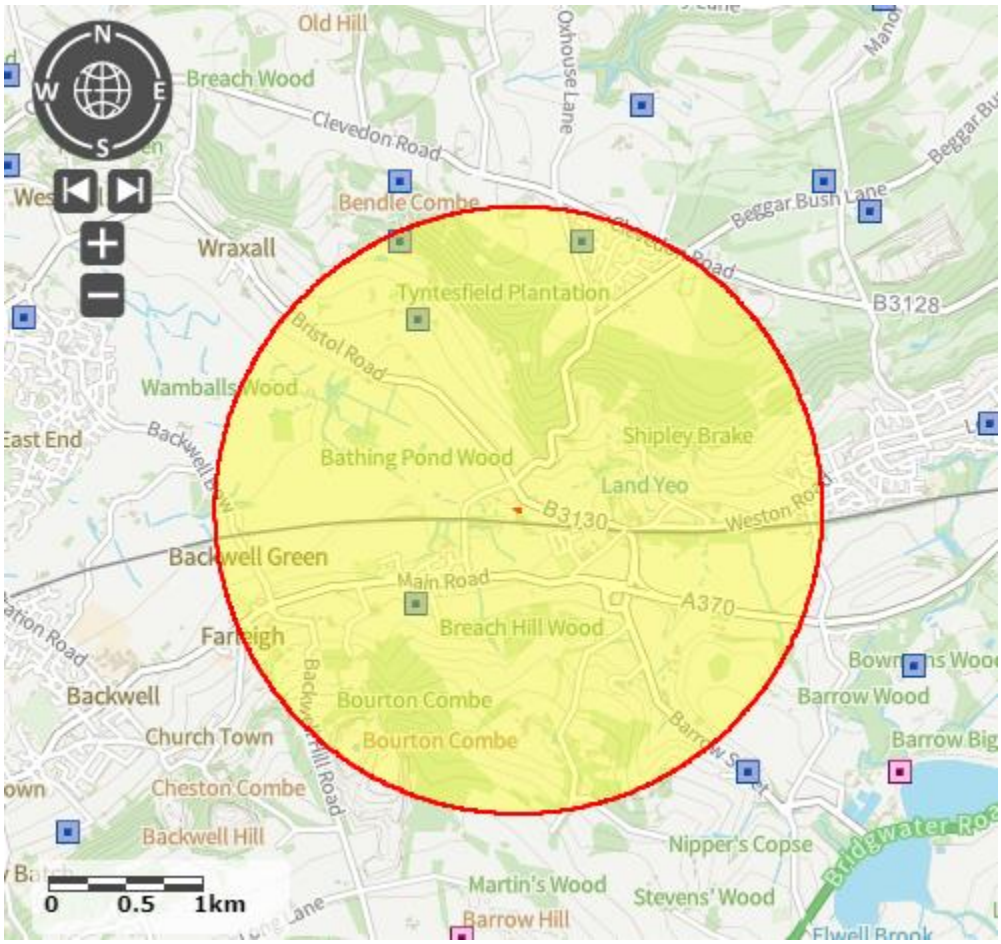
Designated Site Map (2km Buffer)



Legend

- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (England)
- Local Nature Reserves (England)
- National Nature Reserves (England)
- Ramsar Sites (England)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)
- Special Areas of Conservation (England)
- Special Protection Areas (England)

Granted European Protected Species Licence Map (2km Buffer)



Legend

Granted European Protected Species Applications (England)

- Amphibian
- Bat
- Cetacean
- Invertebrate
- Other Mammal
- Plant
- Reptile