BOREHAM HOUSE, 86 BOREHAM ROAD, WARMINSTER, WILTSHIRE

PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEY

On behalf of

MR & MRS HARRIS-JOHNSTONE

Final Report

25th September 2023

Prepared by

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1 Introduction

The client is seeking planning permission from Wiltshire Council to convert a detached outbuilding for residential use. The existing building is used for storage and is located within the garden of Boreham House, 86 Boreham Road, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 9JW as shown below.



Malford Environmental Consulting was commissioned to undertake a Phase 1 bat (building roost inspection) and ecology survey of the existing building. The survey was undertaken by Dr Stephen Dangerfield (NE Class Licence Level 1 WLM-CL17, Licence No. 2015-11600-CLS-CLS) and Anton Kattan (Natural England bat survey licence Level 2 Class CL18, Licence No. 2015-12201-CLS-CLS), who have a combined 50 years' professional experience and are both full members of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

The survey concentrates on identifying the presence of protected species (particularly bats), inhabiting or using the existing building. This report sets out the findings of the survey, and where necessary makes recommendations for actions to ensure the proposed development complies with nature conservation legislation and meets the requirements of planning policy.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act) requires all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions. Under the NERC Act the local planning authority should not determine a planning application if there are any surveys outstanding for European protected species. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), July 2021, requires the planning system should conserve and enhance the natural environment (Section 15) by, *inter alia*, 'protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity value' and 'minimising impacts and providing net gains for biodiversity' (para 174) and 'protection and recovery of priority species' (para 179). This is reflected in Wiltshire Council Core Policy 50.

2 Scope of Work and Methodology

A phase 1 bat roost inspection and ecology survey was undertaken on 13th September 2023. The survey included an assessment of the actual presence or potential for the building to support roosting bats undertaken by a licensed bat surveyor in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust guidelines[1]. The survey included an internal and external inspection of the building, including any enclosed roof space where it was accessible. A ladder, high-powered torch, binoculars and endoscope were all available and were used where necessary to examine roof space and other small spaces potentially suitable for roosting bats to occupy.

Evidence of bats, considered during the search included:

- Droppings.
- Urine staining.
- Feeding remains (such as moth wings).
- Smudge marks and scratches around potential bat roost holes.
- Live roosting bats, bat skeletal remains or dead bats.

Conditions indicating an absence of bats can include the presence of spider webs, bird nesting material and wasp nest material blocking access holes or possible roosting gaps, or sheltering live butterflies/moths or cluster flies.

Bat roost potential was established using the following scale:

1. *Negligible potential/not a roost*: no suitable features
2. *Low potential*: one or more suitable features that could be used by individual bats opportunistically
3. *Moderate potential*: one or more suitable features that could be used by bats, but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status
4. *High potential*: one or more suitable features that are suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a regular basis
5. *Confirmed roost*: evidence of current/recent bat occupation

The survey also assessed the building for the presence of nesting birds and other protected species.

[1] Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn*). The Bat Conservation Trust, London

3 Baseline Conditions

Photographs of the building are presented in Appendix A.

3.1 Building

3.1.1 Exterior

The building is single-storey and measures approximately 10m long by 6m wide, and is divided into four separate compartments. It has a pitched/hipped roof with two small flat roofed sections over a dormer window and rear extension. External walls are sealed brickwork.

The pitched roof is clad in cement pan tiles and clay ridge capping, with the small flat roof over the window clad in metal sheet and the rear extension flat roof clad in asphalt roofing felt. The roof and ridge tiles are all intact, closely inter-locking and leading ridge cap edges and end tiles are all sealed with mortar leaving no significant gaps. The roof appears to have been re-roofed relatively recently with a modern roof liner present and the mortar under roof tiles appearing to be clean and of recent origin.

There is small metal ventilation unit on the roof and this is sealed with close-fitting lead flashing leaving no gaps. There are overhanging eaves, which are sealed with timber boards on top of the rafters. There are two small sections of timber box soffit on the southern end of the sloping roof. There are a few small external holes as follows:

- Slot gap between door lintel and brick wall on the front of the building;
- Small hole at top of soffit box on the front of the building;
- Small hole at top of soffit box on the rear of the building;
- Slot gap between the door and brick wall of the small room on the rear of the building; and
- Small crack in mortar under leading edge tiles on front of the building.

These gaps were closely inspected and found to be either very small/shallow, open and light/draughty or lead directly into the building interior or are in deep shade on the rear of the building, and as such generally unsuitable for supporting bats. All gaps were spanned by or covered with established spider webbing. All gaps were closely inspected for evidence of bats (see Section 3.3).

Each compartment is accessed via single or double wooden doors, which are generally close-fitting except for very narrow gaps over the doors. There is a window on the front and at the rear associated with the northern and middle compartments, and there is a ventilation hole in the rear wall that is covered by a metal grill preventing access by wildlife.

3.1.2 Interior

The northern compartment has sealed and painted brick walls, with a vaulted ceiling comprising lathe and plaster, which is intact and sealed. There is an opening for the ventilation unit in the ceiling. The floor is tiled. The ceiling, including the ventilation unit, is spanned or filled with established spider webbing.

The middle compartment has sealed/painted brick or render walls, with a vaulted ceiling comprising lathe and plaster. Most of the ceiling is intact and sealed, but there is a small open hatch and two small sections of plaster have come away. The floor is tiled. The open hatch and missing plaster in the ceiling are spanned with established spider webbing, while the low enclosed roof space is filled with established spider webbing.

The two small rooms at the southern end of the building have sealed brick or rendered walls. The ceilings comprise modern timber rafters and synthetic roof liner. The tops of the walls are sealed. The rooms support established spider webbing along eaves etc., while the rear room is filled with webs.

The interior of the building has no internal gaps or hidden voids that could potentially be exploited by roosting bats. There are openings into parts of the very small, enclosed roof void but this space is filled with established spider webbing and there appears to be no way of bats accessing these spaces.

3.2 Surrounding garden

The front of the building is hard-standing while the rear and sides of the building are enclosed by trees and shrubs including yew (*Taxus baccata*) and cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), which shroud the building and maintain deep shade.

The remaining garden is formal, close-mown lawn with mature trees and other garden planting.

3.3 Bats

The building is unsuitable for supporting roosting bats as there are no external gaps, internal gaps or hidden voids that bats could potentially exploit, and access into the building interior is very limited. External gaps are sub-optimal for roosting bats but were visually inspected.

There is no evidence of bat roosting or other bat activity (no live bats, no dead bats, no accumulated or scattered droppings, no urine splashes and no insect feeding remains) found within or on the exterior of the building. Furthermore, the ceilings, eaves and the very small roof space were spanned by or filled with established spider webbing showing that bats have not entered these spaces or used features within these spaces.

Given the physical construction and location of the building (much of which is shrouded by vegetation and in deep shade) combined with a complete lack of evidence of bat use and evidence suggesting an absence of bats (i.e. established spider webbing), the building is classed as Category 1 (not a roost), which has negligible potential to support roosting bats in the future.

No further bat survey is necessary for this proposed development. There is no bat mitigation required for this proposed development.

3.4 Other protected species

There is no evidence of active or previous nesting birds within or on the building.

There are no other protected animals inhabiting/using the building or immediate surrounding land.

No further ecological survey is necessary for this proposed development. There is no ecological mitigation required for this proposed development.

4 Conclusion

The outbuilding is not used by bats for roosting or as a place of rest and the building has negligible potential to support roosting bats in the future. It is concluded that the conversion of the building does not require a Natural England licence under the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. No mitigation for the protection of bats is necessary for this proposed development.

No other protected species were found to inhabit or use the building or immediate surrounding land. No mitigation for the protection of wildlife is necessary for this proposed development.

Given that this proposed development is conversion of an existing single-storey building there is no opportunity to integrate any wildlife habitat features into the building design proposals. However, a habitat feature to provide an enhancement for roosting bats within the garden of Boreham House is presented in Section 5.

5 Ecological Enhancement

To provide an enhancement for crevice-dwelling roosting bats, for example pipistrelle bats, two pre-fabricated general purpose bat roosting boxes will be installed on a mature oak (*Quercus* sp) tree in the rear garden of Boreham House (see below and Appendix A).



Boxes will preferably be a Schwegler 2F (left photo) or Schwegler 1FF (middle photo) or Beaumaris (right photo) or an equivalent depending on availability at time of purchase.

The two bat boxes will be installed on the tree trunk as far above the ground as possible (minimum 3m above ground level) and orientated to face in a southerly direction to receive partial sunlight. This location provides sufficient height and warmth from the sun. The boxes will be positioned to ensure there is a clear line of flight to the bat box entrances.

The bat boxes will be erected as per the manufacturer's guidelines under the guidance of an experienced bat ecologist.







Appendix A Photographs





Front of outbuilding





Rear and northern end of outbuilding which is shrouded by trees and shrubs





Interior of northern compartment with open metal ventilation in ceiling filled with webs



Interior of middle compartment with open hatch and missing plaster – both spanned/filled with webs



Southern compartments on the front (left) and at the rear (right)



Slot on front of building filled with webs (left), gap at top of soffit on rear of building (middle) and small roof space filled with established spider webbing (right)



Shallow, webbed crack in mortar on front of building (left) and mature oak tree in rear garden of Boreham House where two bat boxes will be installed (right)