CHENEY COTTAGE, DITTERIDGE, BOX

ECOLOGY TECHNICAL REPORT – 13th NOVEMBER 2023
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Introduction

In October 2023, ACD Environmental Ltd carried out an update Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of Cheney Cottage, Ditteridge, Box, Wiltshire SN13 8QF, hereafter referred to as 'the Application Site'. The Application Site comprises four buildings including a thatched cottage named Little Cheney Cottage, a stable cottage, storage shed and a static caravan. The buildings are located within private gardens, which are predominantly amenity grassland with tall ruderal and a small strip of plantation woodland.

The Application Site will be subject to a full planning application submitted to Wiltshire Council. The proposals include the demolition of the storage shed and static caravan, refurbishment of the stable cottage into ancillary residential accommadation and the construction of a garden studio with associated access, soft landscaping and replacement planting of trees.

This technical update has been produced to summarise the results of previous surveys in addition to those of the update PRA in order to provide information on the scheduled protected species surveys and to outline possible mitigation and compensation measures. This Technical Report should be read in conjunction with the Ecological Impact Assessment Report (Wildwood, 2019)[1].

Background

A PRA and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the Application Site was undertaken by Wildwood Ecology in 2017. The stable cottage was assessed as being of moderate suitability to support roosting bats and Little Cheney Cottage was assessed as being of low suitability to support roosting bats. Two bat activity dusk emergence/dawn re-entry surveys were undertaken in 2017. Update bat surveys were then undertaken on the buildings in 2019 to ensure no that no significant changes had occurred, comprising a further two

[1] Wildwood (2019) *Ecological Impact Assessment Report Cheney Cottage, Ditteridge,* Doc Ref; WWE19087/ECIA/U/B dated 18/07/2019.

dusk emergence/dawn re-entry surveys. A total of four separate dusk emergence/dawn re-entry surveys were therefore undertaken by Wildwood Ecology between 2017 and 2019.

In 2017, these surveys confirmed the stable cottage as a day roost for brown long eared bat *Plecotus auritus* (1 bat) and a day roost for common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* (1 bat). In 2019, the update surveys confirmed the stable cottage as a day roost for common pipistrelle (1 bat), soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* (1 bat) and brown long-eared (1 bat) bats. No bats were recorded using Little Cheney Cottage in 2017 or 2019. The storage shed and static caravan within the Application Site were assessed as having negligible suitability for roosting bats in 2017 and 2019 and no further surveys were undertaken on these buildings.

On 14th September 2022, an update PRA survey was undertaken by Rebecca Brown BSc (Hons) ACIEEM of ACD Environmental Ltd. Given the number of existing bat surveys already undertaken, the consistent nature of the results and the fact that the buildings were found to be in a similar condition, only one emergence survey was considered necessary. The emergence survey was undertaken on the 14th September 2022 by three surveyors: Rebecca Brown, Jennifer Lackie MSci ACIEEM and Lisa Durrant BSc MPhil MCIEEM of ACD Environmental Ltd. The emergence survey confirmed that the stable cottage was still being used as a day roost for a single common pipistrelle bat. The bat emerged from the ridge of the roof on the western elevation at 20.00, 31 minutes after sunset. This location was consistent with a confirmed day roost for common pipistrelle recorded in 2017. A possible emergence from a soprano pipistrelle bat was also recorded on the northern gable end of the stable cottage at 20:28, 59 minutes after sunset. However, given limited light levels at this time this emergence was not confirmed, but this location was consistent with a confirmed day roost for a single common pipistrelle bat recorded in 2017. No emergences were recorded from Little Cheney Cottage.

Table 1: Summary of emergence/re-entry surveys undertaken to-date.

Date	Surveyors	Survey Type	Survey Results
19/07/2017	Wildwood Ecology Ltd	Dusk emergence	1 x brown long-eared day roost 1 x common pipistrelle day roost
03/08/2017	Wildwood Ecology Ltd	Dawn re-entry	1 x brown long-eared day roost 1 x common pipistrelle day roost
19/06/2019	Wildwood Ecology Ltd	Dusk emergence	1 x common pipistrelle day roost 1 x soprano pipistrelle day roost 1 x brown long-eared day roost
02/07/2019	Wildwood Ecology Ltd	Dawn re-entry	1 x brown long-eared day roost
14/09/2022	ACD Environmental Ltd	Dusk emergence	1 x common pipistrelle day roost

			1 x soprano pipistrelle day roost (unconfirmed)

Methodology

An update PRA survey was carried out on the 23rd October 2023 by Ryan Yeates BSc (Hons) ACIEEM, who holds a Natural England Level 1 Class Licence for bats. The purpose of this survey was to confirm that no significant changes had occurred since 2022 and to determine the need for further survey and/or mitigation.

The PRA was carried out with reference to best practice guidelines[2]. As Little Cheney Cottage doesn't have a roof void, and access into the void at the stable cottage wasn't possible; this was an external inspection survey only. The purpose of this survey was to search for bats/evidence of bats, assess the likelihood of bats being present, confirm that no significant changes had occurred and to determine the need for further survey and/or mitigation.

A systematic search was made of the buildings and the ground, especially below potential access points where present. Such features include windows sills, windowpanes, walls, tiles, lead flashing, eaves, behind surfacing materials and under tiles, and other cracks and crevices that provide protection from the elements.

Results

The results of the update PRA were largely consistent with those recorded during the previous PRAs.

The wooden storage shed and static caravan were still considered to be of negligible suitability for roosting bats.

Little Cheney Cottage still supported a gap in the soffit box at the south-western elevation. However, new potential roost features (PRFs), comprising gaps underneath the wooden fascia, were recorded at the

[2] Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

eastern elevation. Despite this, Little Cheney Cottage was still considered to be of low suitability for roosting bats.

The stable cottage has previously been characterised as a confirmed day roost for common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and brown-long eared bats. The cottage still supported the previously identified PRFs (gaps in mortar along the ridge, gaps under timber cladding on gable ends and gaps under edge boards to side extension). However, the gaps under the timber cladding and edge boards were considered to be more widespread. In addition, gaps are now present within the timber cladding on the southern extension where the cladding has buckled. Although the stable cottage is already a confirmed roost, it is considered to support a greater number of PRFs than were present during previous surveys.

Photographs can be found at **Appendix 3**.

Discussion and conclusion

The updated PRA of the Application Site confirmed that, although Little Cheney Cottage and the stable cottage now support additional PRFs, the bat roosting suitability of the buildings has not significantly changed. Therefore, at this present time, an update emergence survey is not considered to be required to inform planning, and the proposed mitigation and compensation measures that have been previously outlined are still considered to be appropriate.

However, an updated emergence survey will need to be undertaken prior to the 'Low Impact' Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) application.

Mitigation/compensation

Previous evidence from 2017-2022 suggests that the stable cottage is used as a day roost for common pipistrelle (1), soprano pipistrelle (1) and brown long-eared bats (1). These roosts are of site importance[3].

[3] Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2023). *UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Ampfield.*

This is because common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats are common and widespread within the UK, and current evidence suggests only small numbers/individual bats use the roost.

The measures will include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A toolbox talk will be delivered by an appropriately licenced bat ecologist to all site operatives prior to the commencement of any demolition or building works.
- Timing constraints will be put in place on the works affecting areas around PRFs and known roosts. These works would be timed to avoid the bat maternity season (generally May to August inclusive) and hibernation season (generally December to February inclusive).
- A licenced bat ecologist (Level 2) will be in attendance to supervise works to areas that are known to support roosting bats, or which have potential to support roosting bats. The stable cottage will undergo a soft demolition by hand.
- The destruction of the roosts will be compensated for through the provision of 3x Schwegler 2FN bat boxes, which will be installed on trees under the ownership of the client. Evidence suggests a single brown long-eared bat is using a crevice feature and there is no requirement for roof void provision.
- These bat boxes will be maintained in position in perpetuity. Any bats encountered during the works will be translocated to these pre-installed bat boxes.
- No additional lighting is being proposed.
- Where possible, existing habitats will be retained to ensure no impacts to commuting and foraging bats and other wildlife occur. Native species of local provenance will be used for any new planting.
- Additional bat boxes should be installed on the new building to enhance the Application Site for roosting bats. These will comprise Beaumaris Woodstone Bat Box (or similar).

The recommendations outlined within this Ecology Technical Report will ensure that the development avoids impacts on roosting bats and that it complies with relevant policy and legislation.

APPENDIX 1: BAT SURVEY PLAN (2022)



APPENDIX 2: PROPOSED SITE PLAN



APPENDIX 3: SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



Photograph 1: Gap in soffit-box at south-west elevation of Little Cheney Cottage.



Photograph 2: Gap in wooden fascia at east elevation of Little Cheney Cottage.



Photograph 3: Gaps under timber cladding at gable end of the stable cottage.



Photograph 4: Gaps under edge boarding of the stable cottage.



Photograph 5: Gaps within buckled timber cladding at south extension of the stable cottage.