THE TYRER PARTNERSHIP

Ecology Consultants/Surveyors
Specialising in Protected Species

Formby Business Centre, 42 Duke Street, Formby, Merseyside L37 4AT

Tel: 01704 875781 Fax: 01704 382304 Mobile: 07719 108429

Email address **stan@tyrer-ecologicalconsultants.co.uk**
kylee@tyrer-ecologicalconsultants.co.uk

29 Whitecroft Lane, Mellor, Blackburn, BB2 7HA

Survey in Relation to Bats

Prepared for:

PHD Ltd
Marathon House
The Sidings Business Park
Whalley
Lancashire
BB7 9SE

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1.0 Introduction & Reason for Survey

1.1 As part of a proposed planning application 29 Whitecroft Lane, Mellor, an inspection and assessment was undertaken of the property in relation to bats. PHD Ltd commissioned the inspection and report on behalf of the site owner. It is understood that the proposals for the building involve a small single storey extension to the west facing elevation, which will accommodate a much needed additional bathroom (Fig. 1). As part of the Local Authority's Planning Policies ecological surveys are generally required, particularly where a specially protected species is or may be present and could be affected by the proposals for which the Application seeks consent.

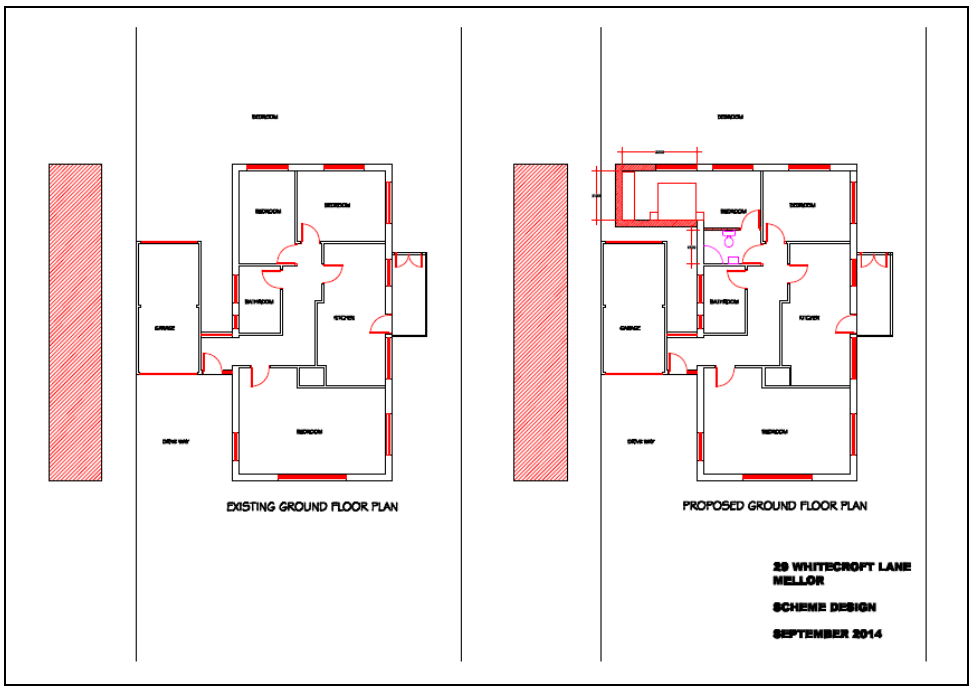


Fig 1. Existing and proposed floor plan

1.2 The aim of the inspection was to initially ascertain if the building is of value to bats; if found to be suitable for bats or signs of use was located then more detailed surveys will be recommended i.e. dusk/dawn emergence/re-entry surveys during the main active season of bats which is May – August. If bat/s or their roost/place of rest/shelter is subsequently affected by the work then a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence would be required to proceed with the development.

1.3 The optimum time to investigate buildings for evidence of a bat roost is May – August, however that is not to say they cannot be inspected and assessed outside of that time and frequently the results can be conclusive, which can save time and expense for Planning Applicants but it should be borne in mind that equally the inspection can be inconclusive. If potential was found to be moderate - high or the results of the survey were inconclusive then recommendations would indicate the requirement for nocturnal surveys to be undertaken at the site during the breeding season of bats. (May – August)

2.0 Protected Species

2.1 All British bats and their **roosts are afforded protection under the 1981 Wildlife & Countryside Act (as amended) and are listed in Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). When dealing with cases where a European Protected Species (all UK bats) may be affected, a planning authority is a competent authority within the meaning of the Regulation 7 of the 2010 Regulations and therefore has a statutory duty to have due regard to the provisions of the Regulations in the exercise of its functions.

2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has replaced the existing Planning Policy Guidelines. (PPG's) In relation to wildlife PPG 9 was one of the documents to which Planning Authorities referred to, particularly where a specially protected species is or may be present and will be affected by a development for which a Planning application seeks consent. The aims of the NPPF in relation to species and habitats are that it places a clear responsibility on Local Planning Authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity and to encourage on the consideration that should be given to Protected Species where they may be affected by development. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Circular 06/2005 provides administrative guidance on the application of the law in relation to planning and nature conservation.

This is supported by a guide to good practice entitled 'Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation: Building in Biodiversity' in which paragraphs 5.34 and 5.35 identify that species such as bats are highly dependant upon built structures for survival and that roosts can be easily incorporated into existing and new developments/conversions to benefit these species.

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles

If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused

2.3 Use of Buildings by Bats

a) Summer breeding roost.
b) Hibernation.
c) Transitional or temporary roost.

Roost selection is often closely correlated to suitable foraging habitat within a reasonable commuting distance from the roost and different sites are used depending upon insect densities and abundance, climatic conditions can also affect their ability to successfully forage. All British bats are insectivorous.

** The term roost is generically referred to as a place that bat/s use for the any of the above reasons, however it should be noted that under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 (Regulation 41) the term roost is not used but refers to "*a breeding site or resting place of such an animal"* and is afforded legal protection. The roost, breeding site or resting place of bats, which ever terminology is used is legally protected whether or not bats are in occupation.

3.0 Protected Species in Lancashire

3.1 Up to nine bat species have been regularly recorded in Lancashire most of which use built structures, notably occupied residential properties, for roosting. The most frequently encountered species is the Pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus)* and its abundant status in Lancashire is reflected throughout the UK.

4.0 Survey Methodology

4.1 The daytime survey was conducted on the 09th September 2014 when 29 Whitecroft Lane, Mellor was inspected for potential places that may be of value to bats and if evidence of use was present. A loft space is present within the residential property which was investigated for evidence of bat use that mainly includes droppings or prey items and the external elevations were investigated from ground floor level with close focussing binoculars for places that are frequently used by bats as roosts or ingress points providing access into roost chambers; the loft space was inspected with the aid of a high powered torch.

4.2 The survey was conducted by Mr J Thomson, who is an experienced bat surveyor, shortly to obtain his Natural England Class 2 bat licence. Mr Thomson is an accredited agent on a Class 2 Natural England bat licence of Mr S. Irwin who has thirty years of bat ecology experience. The results, conclusions, and recommendations have been assessed by Mr Irwin and his assessment concurs with that of Mr Thomson.

4.3 The results, conclusions and recommendations are based on a number of factors i.e.

Practical experience of surveyor
Knowledge of bat species relevant to the site location
Nature of the immediate and surrounding habitat in relation to foraging opportunities
Condition of the structure
Presence/absence of roost potential
Value of roost potential – if present

4.4 During the survey the surrounding habitat was evaluated in relation to bats as very often roost selection is closely correlated with the surrounding habitat.

5.0 Constraints

5.1 The daytime survey was conducted at the end of the main active period and breeding season of bats, which is just outside of the optimum time to undertake such surveys. No access restrictions preventing assessment of all required building features arose. Consequently, a full appraisal and inspection of the building was achievable in relation to assessing the level of bat roost potential that may exist.

5.2 Taking into consideration the above it is considered that there were no significant survey constraints that would prevent the gathering of information on which to base conclusions and recommendations.

6.0 Results

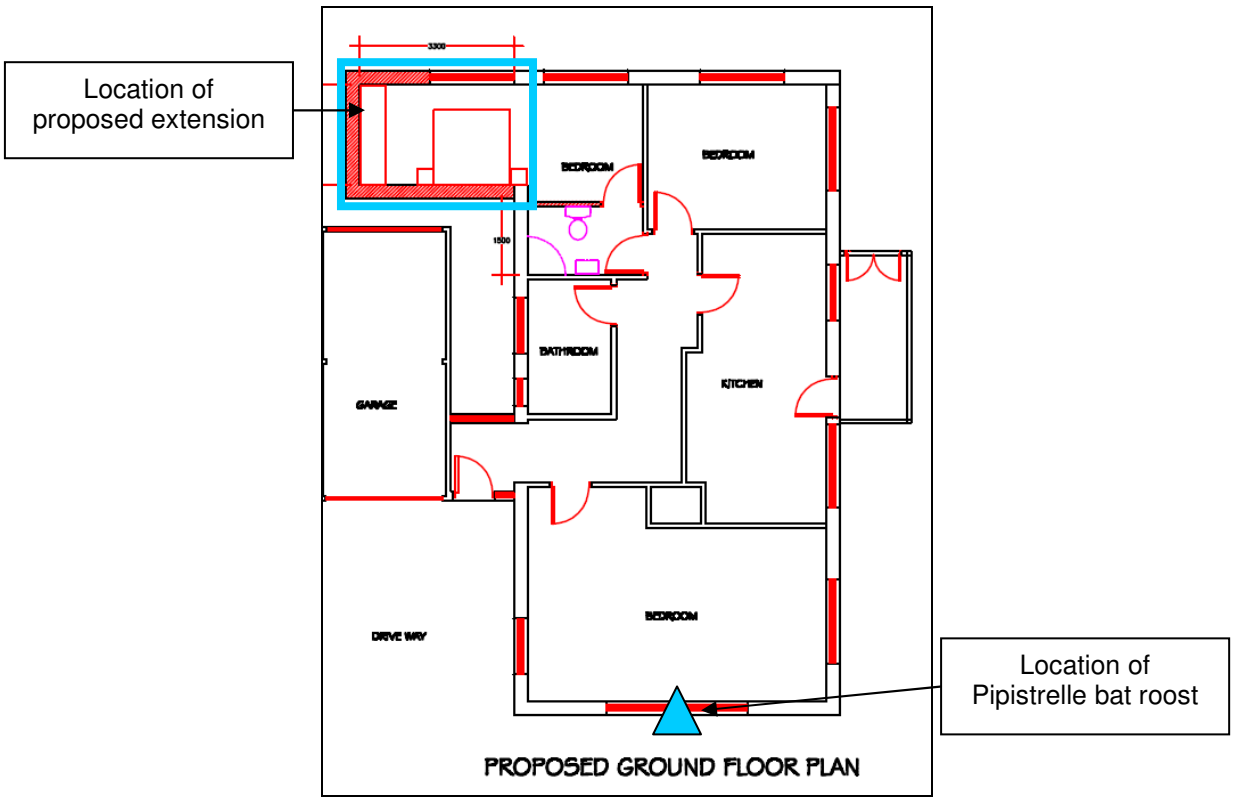
6.1 29 Whitecroft Lane included within the current planning application is located on the southern edge of Mellor, approximately 3.5 kilometres north west of Blackburn city centre. The immediate and adjoining semi-natural habitat consists of residential gardens with associated linear and scattered tree/shrub, and open agricultural land (pasture dominant) with associated boundary features, such as tree line and hedgerow. Other ecologically favourable elements include woodland patches at Lodge and Jeffery Wood, and freshwater habitats such as Jeffery Pond.

6.2 The local structure of the above described semi-natural features would provide a sufficient level of connectivity for bats, such as the Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) which is the most frequently occurring species in urban and suburban areas. Where such habitat is present close to buildings then the percentage use of those buildings, by bats, increases providing roost opportunities are available.

Location of 29 Whitecroft Lane, Mellor & immediate habitat

6.3 The detached bungalow is currently occupied and in excellent condition, and thus possesses a warm and dry interior environment. The building is a single storey brick construction with a tile pitched roof, and is found to be to approximate dimensions of 7.5 metres wide x 13.5 metres long. During the interior inspection of the property a loft space is present and covers the entire structure area with an estimated height of 1.75 metres. The loft space is found to be warm and uncluttered, however, is subject to regular disturbance and use of artificial light, due to the residents frequently accessing the space. Therefore, despite the area being of a suitable size that would suit the requirements of loft dwelling bats such as Brown Long Eared (*Plecotus auritus*), the general disturbance will reduce the potential for such species to be present within the loft as this is a species that favour large undisturbed loft spaces that allow free flight. Additionally, the immediate isolation form woodland further diminishes the suitability of the property for Brown Long Eared bats, and no recent or historic evidence of use such as droppings or prey remains indicative of this species was identified.

6.4 During the inspection it is noted that bitumen underfelt is present beneath the roof tiles which will therefore, increase the potential for crevice dwelling species such as the Pipistrelle bat whereby they often roost between the two materials, furthermore, during the investigation 15 droppings indicative of the Pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus)* were located close the south interior gable wall. The breeding roosts of Pipistrelle bats are proportionally higher in occupied residential dwellings were the warm, dry conditions favour the requirements of a maternity colony but other structures are also used, especially for hibernation or by male bats which do not need the same conditions as a maternity colony.



6.5 Throughout the external assessment it was noted that soffit boxes are present to all elevations, however, these features were found to be tight fitting with the exception of one area of ingress to the south facing gable elevation, which corresponds to the identified bat droppings within the loft space. Other features often favoured by crevice dwelling bats, most notably the Pipistrelle, such as fascia/barge boards and hanging were found to be absent. Additionally, roof and ridge tiles were found to be tight fitting, thus offering no further potential opportunity for crevice dwelling bats.

7.0 Daytime Conclusions & Implications

7.1 As outlined within the survey results, physical evidence in the form of approximately 15 droppings, indicative of the Common pipistrelle bat, have been located immediately adjacent to the south facing gable elevation. The amount of droppings would suggest the past presence of a single bat using this location exclusively. However, considering the absence of potential access opportunities to all remaining elevations and the location of the proposed extension will be constructed at the opposite end to the roost, there will be no impact on the identified bat roost.

8.0 Daytime Survey Recommendations

8.1 As outlined in section 7.1, there are no anticipated impacts on roosting bats at 29 Whitecroft Lane, Mellor, and the existing roost will be retained and unaffected by the proposals; as such, there are no further recommendations in relations to bats.

APPENDIX I –
Site Photographs

Gaps under soffit on the south facing elevation & associated droppings