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Lynwood, Neddy Lane, Billington BB7 9ND
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Inspection & Assessment in Relation to Bats

Prepared for:

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1.0 Introduction & Reason for Surveys

1.1 As part of a proposed Planning Application at Lynwood, Neddy Lane a daytime inspection was undertaken in relation to bats. AJH Associates Chartered Building Surveyors commissioned the inspection and report on behalf of the site owner. Proposed plans for the building include the removal of the current dormer and conversion of the building into a two storey dwelling including the total re-roofing of the property. 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.

1.2 The aim of the inspection was to initially ascertain if the building is of value to bats; if the building was found to be suitable for bats; signs of bat use were located or the results of the survey were inconclusive then more detailed surveys may be recommended i.e. nocturnal emergence surveys during the main active season of bats i.e. between May – August. If bats were subsequently found during those detailed surveys and may be affected by the work then a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence would be required to legally 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.

Figure 1: Existing and Proposed Elevations

2.0 Bats & Their Requirements

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" which essentially is the same 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 Bat Species in Lancashire

3.1 Up to 9 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 20th February 2015 when the building was inspected for potential places that may be of value to bats and if evidence of use was present. No true loft spaces are present as the building is a dormer bungalow. The exterior elevations were investigated from ground floor level, with the aid of close focussing binoculars, for places that are frequently used by bats as roosts or as access into roost chambers.

4.2 The daytime survey was conducted by Ms K. Swift who is an experienced bat surveyor and an accredited agent on the Class 2 Bat Licence of Mr Stan 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 Ms Swift.

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 and geographical range
Nature of the immediate and surrounding habitat in relation to foraging opportunities
Condition of the building
Presence/absence of a loft space
Presence/absence of roost potential
Value of roost potential – if present

4.5 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 outside of the main active period and breeding season of bats, which is outside of the optimum time to undertake such surveys. However; 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 the above into consideration it is established that there were no significant survey constraints that would prevent the gathering of information on which to base conclusions and recommendations.

6.0 Daytime Results

6.1 The surveyed building is situated on Neddy Lane which is a quiet tree lined residential lane with a small number of detached residential dwellings. Immediate to Lynwood, residential dwellings with mature gardens encompassing trees and shrubs extend into the surrounding landscape; immediately north of Lynwood is open arable pasture with low numbers of broad leaved trees.

6.2 Ecological connectivity is good within the surrounding agricultural matrix, features such as hedgerows in various conditions and established tree lines form strong linear features within a mosaic of habitats. Connectivity for bat species such as the Pipistrelle, (*Pipistrellus*) which is the most frequently occurring species in areas on the rural urban fringe is evident especially to the south. Named habitat features which are potentially of value to foraging and commuting bats in the vicinity of the structure are Tom Ingham Wood 740 metres north west of the site which additionally is well connected to Chew Bank wood located in the same direction. The River Calder lies at 500m north east of the site in association with several connected broadleaved woodlands. To the south favourable habitat features are abundant ranging from water courses to woodlands, namely Dean Brook and the associated habitat of Mytton Fold Golf Club all of which are within 1 kilometre of Neddy Lane.

Location of Lynwood and its immediate habitat

6.3 Lynwood is a detached dormer bungalow with garden frontage accessed directly off Neddy Lane. It is of red brick construction with a conservatory to the rear elevation the dormer is a typical flat mineral felted roof with UPCV cladded walls and lead flashing adjoining the main roof pitch. A true loft space is absent although a small angular void is present to the side of the dormer.

6.4 The void is approximately 8 metres long, 1.5 metres wide and 1.5 metres high and as such is very restrictive in size; it accessed from the landing, insulated and is currently used for storage purposes. Underfelt is present beneath the roof tiles and as a result the void is warm and draught free, although no features are present to cause constant luminance the void is frequently accessed and subsequently illuminated.

6.5 The above mentioned attributes result in the building being entirely unable to meet any of the basic requirements of loft dwelling species such as Brown Long Eared bats (*Plecotus auritus*). The presence of roofing felt was identified during the inspection and when such internal covering is in place, providing exterior access is available, i.e. under the roof tiles, roosting opportunity for crevice dwelling bats, such as the Pipistrelle, will increase whereby they often roost between the two materials. No evidence of use was found within the building to suggest use by any bat species.

6.6 During the external assessment it was noted that the building is devoid of typical features favoured by crevice dwelling bats - most notably the Pipistrelle - such as gaps under roof tiles, hanging tiles and barge/fascia boards. Bats will often seek refuge, providing viable ingress is present, between such features; however on the external elevations these features are absent.

7.0 Daytime Conclusions

7.1 As identified within the survey results no physical evidence has been identified which would suggest the presence of loft or crevice dwelling bats. Furthermore, no potential roost opportunities have been identified for either species thus it can be conclusively established the status of the building is considered to be of an absent categorisation in the context of roost opportunities and the proposed works will have no impact upon bat species.

8.0 Daytime Survey Recommendations & Implications

8.1 In relation to bats no further specific recommendations or additional surveys are applicable in relation to the building prior to its conversion but as generic advice if at any time bat/s is/are encountered then as a legal requirement work should immediately cease and an ecologist contacted for further advice.

8.2 It should be noted that where bat/s or their roost/place of rest/shelter will be affected by the proposed works, then the work at the site could not commence until such time that a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) is applied for and granted to allow the work to legally commence. Notwithstanding the granting of a licence works that would affect a roost cannot take place if a maternity colony is in occupation.

8.3 Natural England provides information and guidance about EPSML and the following extract is included in that guidance:-

If you intend to apply for a licence for development you are advised to seek the guidance of a consultant ecologist. Natural England's view is that:-

- A licence is needed if the consultant ecologist, on the basis of survey information and specialist knowledge of the species concerned, considers that on balance the proposed activity is reasonably likely to result in an offence under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)

- If the consultant ecologist, on the basis of survey information and specialist knowledge of the species concerned, considers that on balance the proposed activity is reasonably unlikely to result in an offence being committed then no licence is required. However, in these circumstances Natural England would urge that reasonable precautions be taken to minimise the effect on European protected species should they be found during the course of the activity. If European protected species are found, cease the work until you have assessed whether you can proceed without committing an offence.

- A licence should be applied for if offences are unavoidable and the work should not be re-started until a licence is obtained.

- The application should be completed by the developer and a consultant ecologist. The ecologist will need to be able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of Natural England that they have the relevant skills and knowledge of the species concerned.

Appendix I –

Site Photographs

Front elevation of Lynwood

Restrictive Roof Void

PVC cladding on dormer

Mortar filled ridge

Tight fitting nature of soffits