http://www.tyrer-ecologicalconsultants.co.uk http://www.facebook.com/ecologicalsurvey

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

Tel: 01704 875781 Mobile: 07719 108429

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

Elswick Farm, Mellor Brow, Mellor, BB2 7EX
(Grid Reference: SD 64846 31014)

Inspection & Assessment in Relation to Bats

Prepared for:

Mrs J Wilkinson
Elswick Farm
Mellor Brow
Mellor
BB2 7EX

Issued : 10 February 2016

Summary

A planning application regarding a property at Elswick Farm, Mellor proposes the addition of a two storey extension to the north elevation. Therefore, the Tyrer Partnership was commissioned to undertake a daytime assessment of the building in relation to bats during January 2016.

The internal inspection revealed that the surveyed property would not meet the requirements of loft dwelling species, and no evidence within the loft was found to suggest their presence. Based upon these survey findings it is currently highly unlikely that the proposed works will impact upon this bat species.

Underfelt is present beneath the roof slates; the presence of this and similar internal linings beneath roof slates can provide opportunity for crevice dwelling bat species, whereby they will roost between the two materials. No evidence was found within the building to suggest the presence of crevice dwelling bats; however evidence of these species is not always visibly present, such is their preference for crevice situations. The external inspection indentified ingress opportunities for crevice dwelling bats under timber fascia, particularly at the north facing elevation.

Therefore, as a precautionary measure, it is recommended that the timber fascia and the first row of roof slates located directly above it on the north facing elevation are removed in a controlled manner under the supervision of a licensed bat ecologist. If in the unlikely event that evidence of use is located, or bat/s are found during this time, the area will need to be made good to its original condition and the bat/s left in situ until such time that and dusk surveys are undertaken during the breeding season (May - August), a subsequent Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation License (EPSML) will also be required to legally undertake the work.

Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction & Reason for Survey

1.1 As part of proposed works at the Elswick Farm, Mellor, a daytime inspection and assessment was undertaken in relation to bats. ********** commissioned the inspection and report on behalf of the site owner; proposals for the surveyed property involve a two-storey extension to the north facing elevation. 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 it was found to be suitable for bats or signs of use were located, or the results of the survey were inconclusive, then more detailed surveys would 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 any structure 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. It should be borne in mind that equally the inspection can be inconclusive.

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 9 bat species have been 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 Greater Manchester is reflected throughout the UK.

4.0 Survey Methodology

4.1 The daytime survey was conducted on 27th January 2015 when the surveyed property at Elswick Farm was inspected for potential places that may be of value to bats and if evidence of use was present. 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; 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 a highly experienced bat surveyor and holder of a Natural England Class 2 bat licence (CLS-14226). The results, conclusions, and recommendations have been assessed by Mr S Irwin who has over thirty years of bat ecology experience, 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 and geographical distribution
Nature of the immediate and surrounding habitat in relation to foraging opportunities
Condition of the buildings
Presence/absence of a loft space
Presence/absence of roost/nesting potential
Value of roost/nesting potential – if present

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

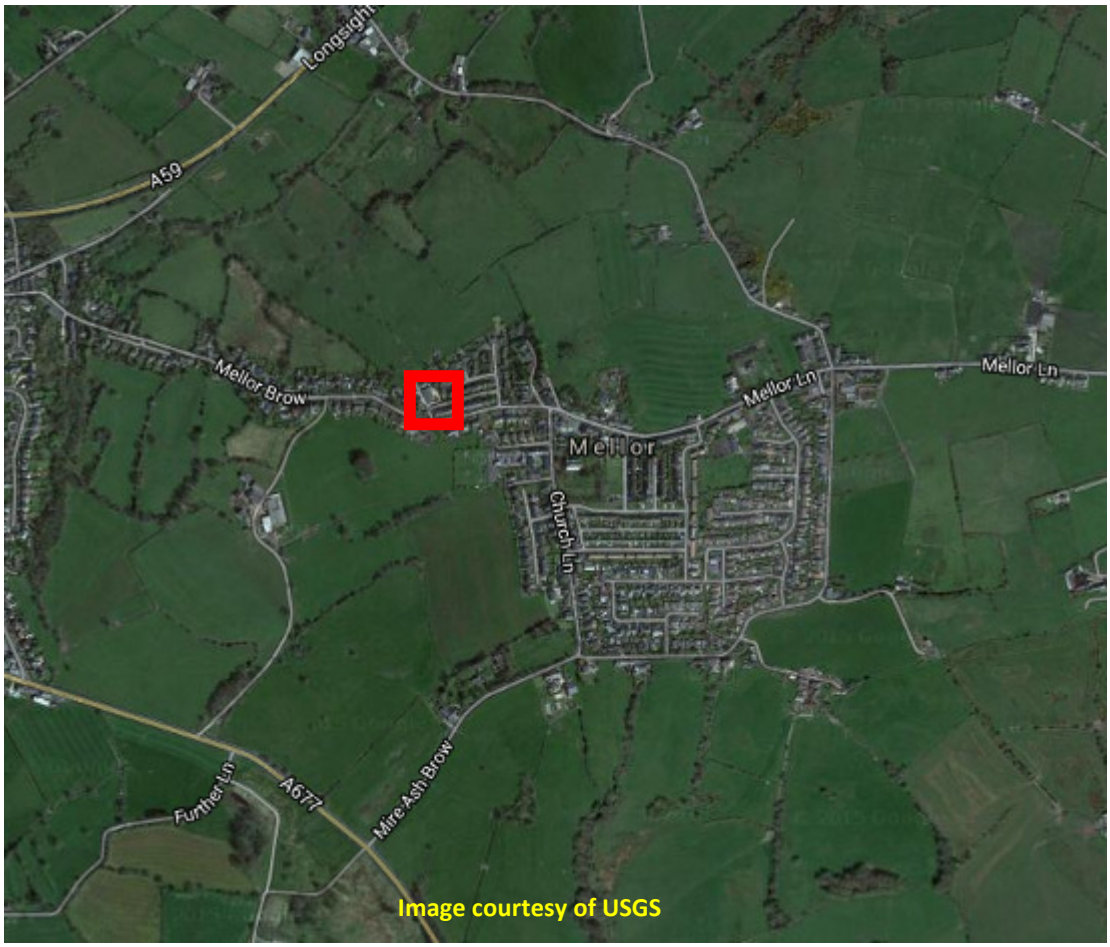
5.0 Constraints

5.1 The daytime survey was conducted outside of the main active period and breeding season of bats, which is beyond the optimum time to undertake such surveys. However, no access restrictions preventing assessment of all required building areas 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 deemed that there were no survey constraints that would prevent the gathering of information on which to base conclusions and recommendations.

6.0 Daytime Results - Bats

6.1 The surveyed building is located within Elswick Farm, which comprises a cluster of agricultural buildings converted for residential purposes situated just off Mellor Road via private access, approximately 0.3 km west from Mellor village centre (SD 64846 31014). Mellor, in its broadest of terms, comprises a relatively small area of settlement that is predominantly residential and surrounded by open rural land dominated by permanent pasture. The immediate habitat to Elswick farm maintains a good level of habitat cover, which features tree lined roads, gardens and associated tree/shrub, other areas with good semi-natural cover such as school grounds and church yards. Furthermore, the extending rural landscape possesses a range of useful features for bats, which would include hedgerow, linear tree, woodland, and patches of grass/scrub mosaic. Collectively, the aforementioned semi-natural features represent a structurally diverse ecological network that is anticipated to provide resource and thus productive habitat for bats.



Location of the Elswick Farm and the immediate/extending habitat

6.2 The surveyed converted barn at Elswick Farm takes the form of a two storey, detached stone-built structure with a slate covered pitched roof. One accessible loft space is present, the extent of which covers the entire surface area of the roof; approximately 14 m long x 6 m wide. The loft space is partially divided and is highly cluttered due to its use for domestic storage purposes; thus, it would not meet the requirements of Loft dwelling bats such as the Brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*). Breathable membrane – which research has proven to be highly detrimental to bats and can cause roost fatalities – is present throughout the underside of roof tiles; the presence of breathable membrane or other internal insulating materials such as underfelt beneath roof slates/tiles can provide opportunity for crevice dwelling species, whereby they often roost between slates/tiles and the roof lining materials, provided external access exists. However, throughout the search of the loft no evidence of use by either loft or crevice dwelling bat species was found, notwithstanding this, evidence of the latter species is not always present in loft spaces due to their preference for crevice situations.

6.3 During the external inspection ingress opportunities for bats were located to the north and south elevations; more specifically, under timber fascia where gaps feature between these external facets and the external walls. Such places can provide viable roosting opportunities for crevice dwelling bats; notably Pipistrelle. Other typical places often favoured by crevice dwelling bats would include soffit boxes, hanging tiles and timber cladding; however such external facets do not feature on the surveyed property. The classification of the building relative to the proposed work and bats is deemed to be less than low.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 From the daytime results it can be concluded that the surveyed property would not meet the requirements of loft dwelling species, and no evidence within the loft was found to suggest their presence. Based upon these survey findings it is currently highly unlikely that the proposed works will impact upon this bat species.

7.2 No evidence of use by crevice dwelling species such as *Pipistrellus* was found during the daytime inspection. This is not to say that this species is absent as opportunities are present and evidence of use is often not possible to detect during initial inspections due to their crevice dwelling nature.

7.3 As the work is restricted to one elevation (cold north facing) and access at this elevation is limited then as a consequence the potential for bats to be present is also limited.

8.0 Recommendations & Implications

8.1 As the proposed extension will only affect one elevation of the property, and ingress for bats is limited to a single feature on said elevation (i.e. timber fascia), the following recommendations are therefore proposed:-

- It is recommended that a licensed bat ecologist should be present to supervise the careful and controlled removal, at the north facing elevation, of the first/second row of roof slates that are located directly above the fascia board, which will then provide visual access into the cavity wall and the space behind the fascia board. If in the unlikely event that bat/s or evidence of bat use is/are found during the removal of the aforementioned features the area will need to be made good to its original condition and the bat/s (if present) left in situ until such time that and dusk surveys are undertaken during the breeding season (May - August).

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 to allow work at the site to legally commence, an application for European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) will be required. Notwithstanding the granting of a licence works that would affect a roost cannot take place if a maternity colony is in occupation. It should also be noted that before an EPSML can be applied for all Planning issues including Consent and any pre-commencement Planning Conditions relative to bats should be resolved.

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