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Mr & Mrs Johnson
22 Ribchester Road
Wiltshire
BB1 9JH

26th April 2021

Dear Mr & Mrs Johnson

Re: Proposed development at 22 Ribchester Road, Wiltshire, BB1 9JH (central grid reference: SD 68630 32579)

Thank you for your request for a biodiversity survey at the above site. I understand that the proposed development is for a rear single storey extension and a loft conversion including installation of a roof dormer to the existing dwelling house.

1.0 Background and Qualifications

The survey was carried out by Pat Waring and Janette Gazzard.

Pat Waring is a licensed great crested newt worker (Class 2 licence), a licensed bat worker (Class 2 licence), registered consultant of the Bat mitigation Class Licence, a Chartered Environmentalist and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology.

Pat has been working as an ecological consultant for over twenty-three years, most recently as Director of Ecology Services UK Ltd. This work includes provision of expert advice and guidance to Statutory Nature Conservation Organisations, National Park Authorities and Lancashire and Yorkshire Police Authorities, as well as the delivery of professional training courses.

Pat has recognised and extensive experience and knowledge of ecological survey, monitoring, condition assessment and impact assessment techniques; these include impact assessment in relation to bats, great crested newts, nesting birds and changes to habitats, as well as ecological surveys and assessments.

Janette is a full member of Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Management.

Janette has over seventeen years professional experience working in ecology and nature conservation, including roles as a Senior Ecologist for a large multidisciplinary company and as a lead adviser for Natural England throughout the North West of England. She has a range of demonstrable skills including habitat surveys, ecological appraisals,

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protected species surveys, conservation management advice and condition assessments.

Pat and Janette meet the requirements for knowledge, skills and practical experience as outlined in the CIEEM technical guidance series, Competencies for Species Surveys available at: <http://www.cieem.net/competencies-for-species-survey-css>

This advice letter complies with national best practice guidance as outlined in: *Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Second Edition*. CIEEM, Hampshire.

1.1 Advisory Note

The information in this letter represents the professional opinion of an ecological consultancy and does not constitute professional legal advice. You may wish to seek professional legal interpretation of the wildlife legislation associated with this area of work.

The information, opinion and advice that Ecology Services UK Ltd has prepared are true, and have been prepared in accordance with the CIEEM Code of Professional Conduct. Ecology Services UK Ltd confirms that the opinions expressed are our true professional bone fide opinions.

Ecology surveys are time-limited; as a rule survey findings can generally be relied on for the season in which surveys took place. However, mobile species such as bats and birds may increase or decrease in numbers and change behaviours over time. Statutory agencies will often accept survey results for 12-18 months, but this varies around the country.

Ecology Services UK Ltd personnel make a professional judgement as to how long the results of our surveys will remain current. Advice and recommendations as regards currency and its impacts on decision making are included in relevant sections below.

2.0 Methodology

In order to assess the habitats and the likelihood of protected species being present at the proposed development site, a visit was undertaken on the 19th April 2021. The proposed development site and close surroundings (the survey area) were searched and assessed for their potential to support a range of protected species known to occur in the local area.

The survey area was walked over and examined in detail. Observations were made from ground level, as well as from telescopic ladders to examine potential bat roost features and potential bird nesting places. An endoscope, although available, was not

required on this occasion. A Coast HP 10R 1000 lumens torch and close-focussing Zeiss Victory FL 8x42 binoculars were also used as aids to visibility.

It is recognised that limiting the survey to a single visit in one month does not take account of bat activity on the site through the whole of the active season (April to October) or at other times of the year.

Limiting the survey period as outlined above does not take account of plant growth through the year. It is possible that a number of flowering vascular plant species would not have been evident during the survey.

3.0 Results of the Survey

22 Ribchester Road comprises an occupied, detached dwelling house constructed of stone with a dual pitched slate roof and chimneys at the gables. There is an adjoining single storey, flat roof garage to the north and car port to the south, as well as front and rear gardens bordered by stone walls and established vegetation. There are mown lawns, hardstanding and planted trees and shrubs within both garden areas.

The exterior of the property is in good condition with occasional gaps, associated with natural fit of the slate roof coverings, missing mortar at the ridges and occasional small gaps along the roof edges. There is a single, large gap on the south east corner below the soffit which is suitable for use by nesting birds. Old signs of bird nesting are also present on the east elevation below the soffit, which has since been sealed tight. Old bird nesting material was also found within the roof void. There is also a fascia board on the rear of the single storey garage that has a gap suitable for access by roosting bats.

The southern half of the roof contains Velux windows and has been previously converted into living space. There are narrow voids (accessed via side hatches) along the eaves that connect with an enclosed roof void in the northern part of the property. All of the voids contain rock wool insulation, bitumastic roof liner and exposed timber roof supports. The main roof void (northern part of the roof) is currently unused, open and clutter free.

Growing on part of the east elevation wall and car port is a climbing vine plant; this has some potential for use by nesting birds. In addition, there are a range of trees and shrubs within the garden and close to the proposed development site that have high potential for use by birds during the nesting season (February to September). Amongst these shrubs are non-native invasive cotoneaster species.

22 Ribchester Road is situated within a residential area in the village of Wilsphire. There are other properties with gardens immediately adjacent and in close proximity. There is a wooded railway line, open fields and a golf course within the close and wider surroundings. The levels of artificial lighting are expected to be at least moderate based on the density of the housing and presence of street lighting.

The immediate surroundings provide at least moderate potential shelter and foraging resources to local bats and high potential shelter and foraging resources to bird populations.

Bats

No bats were found during the site inspection.

Potential roosting features for bats are:

Night roosting

- Low potential – open car port

Day roosting

- Low potential – gaps associated with roof coverings, part roof edges, and garage fascia

Hibernation roosting

- Low potential – gaps associated with slate roof coverings, part roof edges and garage fascia

Low potential in the above examples reflects the condition of the features and their environment. It is our professional judgement that further surveys for bats at this time are not warranted.

Nesting birds

Old bird nesting signs were found associated with south east elevation in the roof void and below the soffit.

There is high potential for nesting birds to be present within gaps associated with the building and garden vegetation during the nesting season (February to September).

4.0 Advice and Recommendations

4.1 Bats

Protected Species	Impacts /Predicted Impacts	Action Required
Bats	It is advised that there is no evidence to suggest that bats pose a constraint to the proposed development. It is advised that there are potential roost features (gaps) suitable for bats associated with roof coverings, roof edges and garage fascia. In this location and landscape setting, these features have low potential for bats to use throughout the year. All bat species are afforded full protection under The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019	Advice (mitigation): All personnel involved in proposed development works should be carefully advised about bats by a professional Ecologist, so that all works are undertaken with a clear understanding about legal aspects, precautions to be adopted and what to do if a bat is found. Prior to development. Advice (mitigation): As a precaution, it is advised that when removal or disturbance of potential roost features such roof coverings are to take place, this should be done carefully by hand. At all times. Advice (mitigation): If bats are found at any time during the development, work must stop until advice has been sought from an appropriately experienced Ecologist. If the development will affect bats, a licence may be required and suitable mitigation put in place. At all times.

Table 1 Bats

4.2 Nesting birds

Protected species	Impacts /Predicted Impacts	Action Required
Nesting birds	It is advised that there is high potential for birds to be nesting within roof edges during the bird nesting season (February to September). Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), wild birds are protected from being killed, injured or captured, while their nests and eggs are protected from being damaged, destroyed or taken. There is no provision under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) for licensing the disturbance of nesting birds or the destruction of nests which are in use, for the purpose of development. If enforcement action were taken the developer would need to rely on the 'incidental result of an otherwise lawful operation' defence if it were not possible to avoid an offence being committed. This defence can only be tested in court and it is therefore important to ensure all possible mechanisms for avoiding an offence are considered.	Advice (mitigation): It is advised that the most appropriate way to address the risk to nesting birds is: Avoid disturbance to the building and vegetation during the nesting season. Or If works cannot be delayed the proposed work area should be carefully checked, immediately prior to works commencing. Checks should be carried out by a suitably experienced ecologist. If the risk of nesting birds remains, then monitoring for nesting bird activity should continue for the duration of works. Prior to any work commencing (checks) and throughout works in nesting season (monitoring). Advice (mitigation): If works are to be undertaken during the nesting season, all people working at the proposed development site should attend a toolbox talk delivered by an appropriately experienced person, to be made aware of the likelihood of encountering nesting birds and how to identify them, the legal protection of nesting birds and their own responsibilities as regards implementation of precautionary measures. Prior to any work commencing.

Protected species	Impacts /Predicted Impacts	Action Required
Nesting birds Continued		Advice (mitigation): If birds are found to be nesting within or in close proximity to the work area during proposed works, it will be necessary to stop and establish an exclusion area. The extent of the exclusion area, which should be determined by a suitably experienced ecologist, will depend on the bird species and the nature of the proposed works. At all times.

Table 2 Nesting Birds

4.3 Non-native invasive plant species

Non-native invasive plant species	Impacts /Predicted Impacts	Action Required
Cotoneaster species confirmed within garden planting	It is advised that the proposed development will have to take account of non-native invasive plant species. Proposed works to the building will involve an amount of disturbance which could result in the spread of non-native invasive plant species which are listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).	Advice (mitigation): All personnel involved in the proposed development works should be made aware of the presence of non-native plant species and how to identify them, so that all works are undertaken with a clear understanding about legal aspects and working methods and precautions to be adopted. Prior to any work. Advice (mitigation): Where possible, leave all boundary and border plants in situ and avoid all activities that have the potential to disturb the ground/plants resulting in the further spread. If plants must be removed, they should be removed carefully by hand and all excavated material (soil and plants) should be removed from the site to a licensed landfill as controlled waste, or burnt on a bonfire where it will not cause nuisance to neighbours through excessive smoke or odour. Prior to and during any work.

Table 3– Non-native invasive plant species

Compliance with the actions outlined in the Tables above will help to avoid committing offences in relation to bats, nesting birds and non-native plant species.

Precautionary measures such as those listed above are generally regarded by Statutory Bodies, Local Planning Authorities and Professional Ecologists as being appropriate where there is a risk of protected species (i.e. bats and nesting birds) being present but further investigative surveys are not required prior to a planning application.

There are no constraints in relation to any other protected species.

If you require any further ecological advice or guidance in relation to the proposed works, please do not hesitate to contact me

Yours sincerely



View of 22 Ribchester Road front (west) elevation (lhs) and rear (east) elevation (rhs)



View showing roof covering with occasional gaps present between slates and ridge(lhs) and internal roof void (rhs)



Old signs of bird nesting below soffit (lhs) and gap on south east corner (rhs)



View of rear garden (lhs) and cotoneaster species growing below window (rhs)

