DAYTIME BAT SURVEY & ECOLOGICAL SCOPING SURVEY

THE BARN BY THE RIVER, KENYON LANE, DINCKLEY, LANCASHIRE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Site Information

1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2021 by Ms Amanda Holt, via Campbell Driver Partnership, to undertake a daytime bat survey and ecological scoping survey at The Barn By The River, off Kenyon Lane, Dinckley (north of Blackburn), Lancashire (O.S. grid reference: SD 68827 36624 – see Figure 1). The proposed development site currently comprises a detached garage and store, with decking to the rear. The site lies within a rural area and is adjacent to the River Ribble.

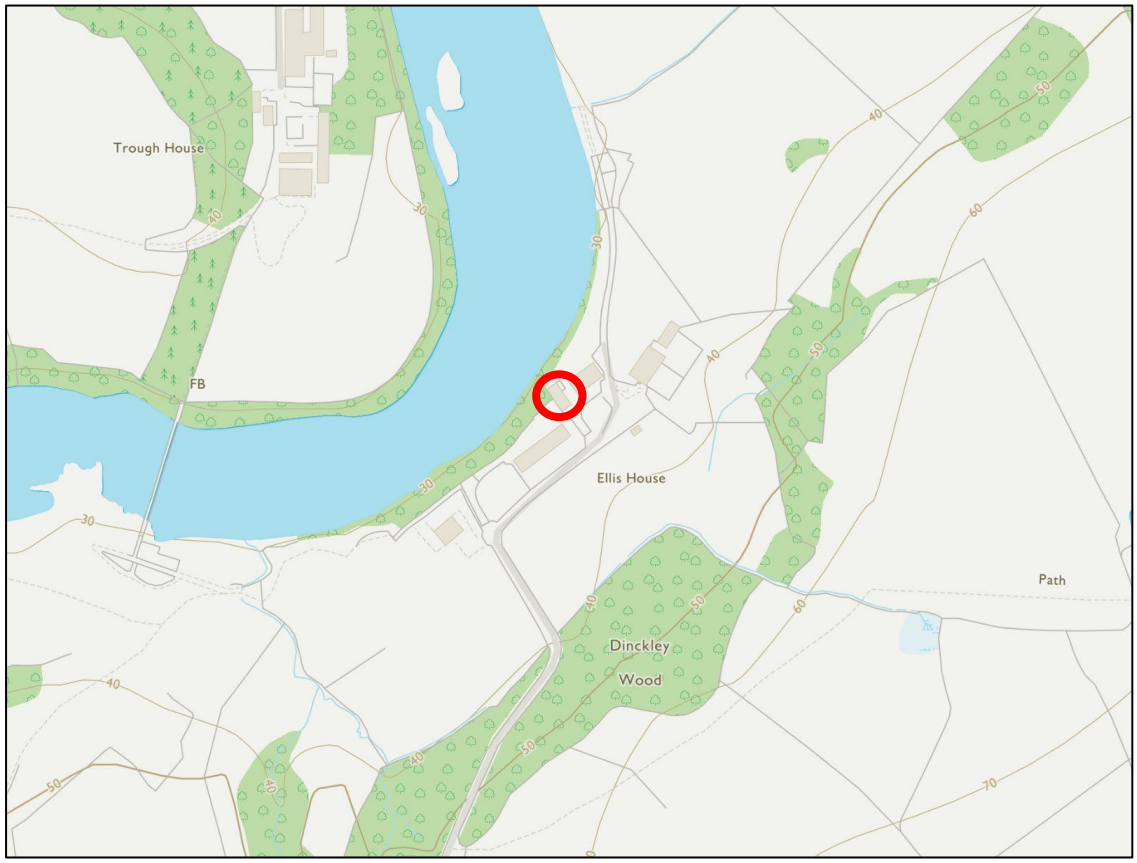


Figure 1 showing the site location circled in red

Description of Development

1.2 The site will be the subject of a planning application for the demolition of the garage/store and the construction of a new residential annexe building in its place. The decking area to the rear would also be extended.

Biodiversity in Planning

1.3 Biodiversity is a material consideration, and Local Planning Authorities have a requirement to consider biodiversity and protected species when determining planning applications. Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019) gives specific reference to minimising the impacts of development on biodiversity. Local and Neighbourhood plans also provide guidance towards protecting and enhancing biodiversity, including priority habitats and notable species.

Legal Context

1.4 All bat species are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (Amendment) (EU Exit), which make is an offence to:

- Deliberately kill, injure or capture a bat;
- Deliberately disturb bats;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat.

1.5 The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) contains further provisions making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- Obstruct access to any structure or place which any bat uses for shelter or protection; or
- Disturb any bat while occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.

1.6 Proposed development works that are likely to disturb or destroy bats or their roosts will need to obtain a licence from the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (e.g., Natural England) prior to work commencing.

1.7 All bird species are protected at their nest under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Daytime Bat Survey

2.1 A daytime bat survey of the garage/store structure was undertaken to search for, and to assess the potential for, a bat roost within the building.

2.2 An external survey was carried out, which included, for example, looking for gaps between any soffit boards and walls, gaps between window frames and the walls, and looking for bat droppings on the walls and window ledges. An internal survey was also carried out, with particular focus on gaps in walls, cracks in roof beams, and any evidence of bat activity, such as bat droppings, in the internal spaces.

2.3 A pair of close-focussing binoculars, an endoscope and a high-powered torch were used to search for evidence of bats.

Ecological Scoping Survey

2.4 In addition to the daytime bat survey an ecological scoping survey was carried out on the wider site, to search for other protected species issues, such as Badger and Otter. This included a search for invasive, non-native species, such as Japanese Knotweed. The proximity of the site to the River Ribble was also assessed.

Personnel and Seasonal Timing

2.5 Ben Crossthwaite (Senior Ecologist) carried out the daytime bat and ecological scoping survey on the 6th July 2021. Ben is highly experienced and fully trained in protected species surveys and holds a Natural England Level 2 Class Survey Licence for bats (Licence Reference: 2020-48541-CLS-CLS). The weather at the time of the survey was bright, dry and calm with scattered cloud.

Survey Constraints

2.6 Daytime bat surveys and ecological scoping surveys can be conducted at any time of the year. The structure could be surveyed fully internally and externally, therefore there were no constraints to the survey.

3.0 RESULTS

Site Description

3.1 The site of the proposed development comprises a single-storey garage and store, which is constructed of brick which is rendered. The tiled roof has a shallow pitch. To the rear of the structure is a small deck. The remainder of the site comprises hardstanding.

Garage/Store External Assessment

3.2 The garage and store is a well-maintained structure (see Photograph 1). The render is intact throughout with no missing masonry on the exterior. All windows and doors are intact and the frames are well-sealed to the surrounding walls. The majority of the structure is painted white with one wall painted blue.

Photograph 1 showing the front exterior of the garage/store

Photograph 2 showing the rear exterior of the garage/store

3.3 An overhang exists at the front of the structure (see Photograph 3). This is intact and the boards are flush to the walls. The walls and overhang support cobwebs. A gap exists between wooden timbers above the garage (see Photograph 4). This is heavily cobwebbed and was investigated with an endoscope with no evidence of bat usage found.

Photograph 3 showing the overhang

Photograph 4 showing the cobwebbed gap

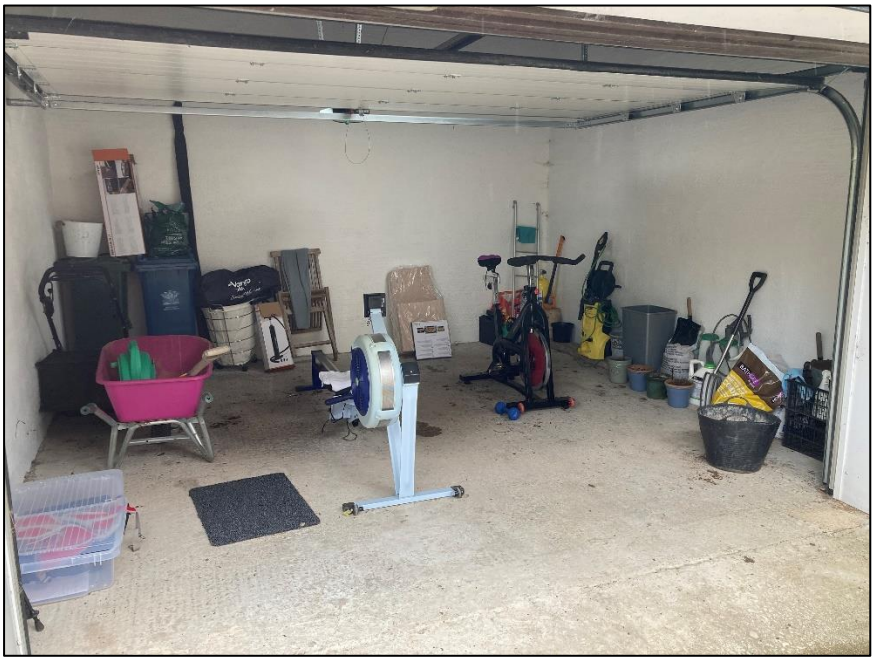
3.4 The roof is pitched and tiled, with all roof tiles in situ and flush to one another (see Photograph 1 above and 5 below). Skylights exist which are intact. The ridge tiles are all intact. Where the roof edges meet the walls, these are sealed with mortar, with no gaps. Where roofs meet, and lead flashing occurs (see Photograph 6), this is flush to the walls and tiles. Wooden bargeboards and plastic guttering exist in places and these are well-maintained and flush to the walls. No potential bat entry/exit points were found across the exterior of the structure.

Photograph 5 showing the roof and west-facing edge

Photograph 6 showing the roof edges and flashing

Internal Assessment

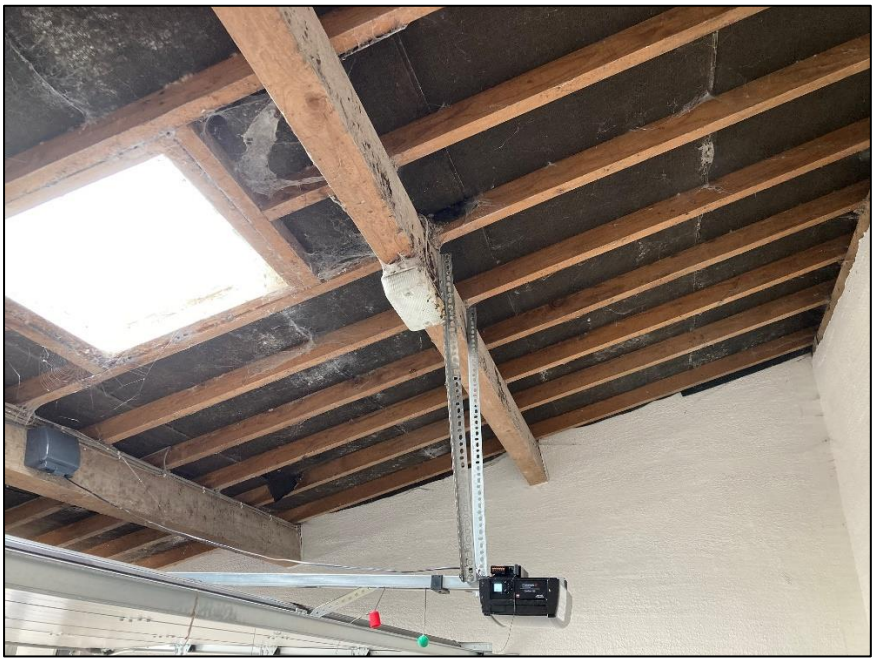
3.5 Internally, the garage and store are well-lit spaces and both are in use (see Photographs 7 and 8). The interior walls are whitewashed and intact. The flooring is concrete.



Photograph 7 showing the interior of the garage

Photograph 8 showing the interior of the store

3.6 No roof voids exist throughout the garage and store. The roof structure throughout is in excellent condition (see Photographs 9 and 10). Felt roof lining is in place across parts of the roof and this in intact with no tears or gaps. The roof timbers are also intact with no cavities. Above the store, the roof is insulated and sealed with chicken wire. No daylight could be seen at any part of the roof. Heavy cobwebs occur throughout and the skylights and windows cause the roof and spaces to be well-lit.



Photograph 9 showing the interior roof of the garage

Photograph 9 showing the interior roof of the store

3.7 A small elevated area of storage exists above the store (see Photograph 10). This area is well-lit, the roof is intact, and it is not sealed. The floorboards are in good condition. A small number of mouse droppings were found on the floor here. No evidence of bat activity was found throughout the structure. Old Swallow nests were found which were dilapidated.

Photograph 10 showing the elevated storage area

4.0 Ecological Scoping Survey

4.1 The building is immediately surrounded by hardstanding, which comprises tarmac and paved areas, used for access and parking. To the rear of the structure lies an area of decking (see Photograph 11). A flowerbed separates the decking from the wall of the structure.

Photograph 11 showing the decking

4.2 The decking lies within a slope leading down to the river (see Photograph 12). To the west of the decking lies scrub and grassland. To the south and east lies rank grassland and ruderal species including Common Nettle *Urtica dioica* and Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense.* To the east of the site (off-site) lie lawns, flowerbeds, shrub beds and patio areas, which form part of the gardens of the main dwelling.

Photograph 12 showing the decking and riverbank

4.3 No invasive, non-native species exist on the proposed development site. Giant Hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum* lies 15 metres from the site close to the water. This is an invasive, non-native species and is listed on Schedule 9 Part II (plants) of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), making it an offence to allow this species to spread into the wild.

Photograph 13 showing the Giant Hogweed

4.4 No evidence of Badger or a Badger sett was found on site or within 30 metres of the site.

4.5 No ponds exist on site or within 250 metres of the site, meaning that Great Crested Newt is unlikely to occur on site.

4.6 The scrub to the west along the riverbank offers suitable nesting habitat for birds.

4.7 No habitat suitable for riverine mammals exists on site. The river edge lies approximately 20 metres down the slope from the proposed construction zone.

4.8 The nearest statutory protected site is the Hodder River Section Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is designated for its geological interest. This lies 3.7km from the site to the north-east.

4.9 The nearest non-statutory protected site is the River Ribble Biological Heritage Site (BHS), which is designated for its fish and riverine mammal assemblages as well as terrestrial and aquatic habitats. This lies approximately 20 metres down the bank from the site to the north.

5.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

5.1 No evidence of bat activity was found at the garage and store structure on site. The building is well-maintained and no potential bat entry or exit points were found externally. No roof voids are present internally, and the interior walls and roof structure offer no suitable cavities for bats. Given the results of the survey, the building is considered to offer negligible bat roost suitability.

5.2 Disused Swallow nests were found within the garage and store. No evidence of other protected species was found on the proposed development site or the riverbank. The habitats on the development site are mostly of no ecological value (the hardstanding).

5.3 The decking will be slightly extended to the west and this will involve the loss a small amount of scattered scrub and rank grassland. Given the construction zone is more or less the footprint of the building, with a small extension to the decking, then there is expected to be no deleterious impact on the riverbank habitats.

5.4 Giant Hogweed, an invasive, non-native species, was found approximately 15 metres from the development site. This should remain undisturbed throughout the construction phase or, if it lies on land within the developers control, it should be eradicated using a suitable herbicide (approved for use near water).

5.5 No statutory protected sites will be directly or indirectly impacted upon by the proposals. A non-statutory protected site lies 20 metres from the site. This is the River Ribble BHS. This will not be directly impacted by the proposals (the construction work takes place above the riverbank and on hardstanding) but in order that no indirect effects take place, it is recommended that no artificial lighting is aimed at the river (see below).

Recommendations

5.6 It is the opinion of the author of this report that the development can proceed without the need for further survey work (e.g. bat activity surveys) or bat mitigation due to the negligible potential of the building to support bats. However, if the work is delayed by longer than two years from the date of this survey, a further bat survey will be required to update the findings.

5.7 It should be noted that bat absence is very difficult to prove definitively due to their mobility and size, and single or small numbers of bats are able to roost in extremely small spaces, such as in gaps between panels. The demolition work should be undertaken with care, for example with roof tiles lifted rather than dragged.

5.8 If during development works a bat (or an accumulation of bat droppings) is discovered at any time, work is to temporarily cease whilst an experienced bat ecologist is contacted for guidance and assistance. This can be Rachel Hacking Ecology (0161 465

8971) who undertook the initial survey, any licensed bat worker, or the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) helpline (0345 1300 228).

5.9 If vegetation clearance is to be carried out within the bird nesting season (which is generally 1st March to 31st August), a nesting bird survey will be required immediately prior to work commencing.

5.10 It is recommended that a sensitive lighting scheme be adopted during the construction and operational phases of the development. No artificial light should be aimed at the River Ribble and associated banks. If lighting is proposed for the decking, this should be low-level and allow no greater than 1 lux lightspill to fall onto riverbank vegetation.

5.11 In order to enhance the site ecologically, it is recommended that two Swallow Nesting Bowls are erected onto the finished building or the adjacent dwelling. Two Schwegler bat boxes should be erected onto retained trees.

6.0 REFERENCES

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