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DAYTIME BAT SURVEY

1 SOUTHPORT BARN COTTAGES, SAWLEY, LANCASHIRE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Site Information

1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2021 by Mr. John Sibbald, via Hawthorn Estates Limited, to undertake a daytime bat survey at 1 Southport Barn Cottage, Sawley Road, Sawley, Lancashire (O.S. grid reference: SD 77628 46111 – see Figure 1). The proposed development site currently comprises a two-storey residential property, which sits at the southern end of a terrace. The site is in a rural location surrounded by open agricultural land with scattered residential properties. The River Ribble lies to the south-west of the site. The habitats immediately surrounding the site offer suitable bat foraging and commuting opportunities.

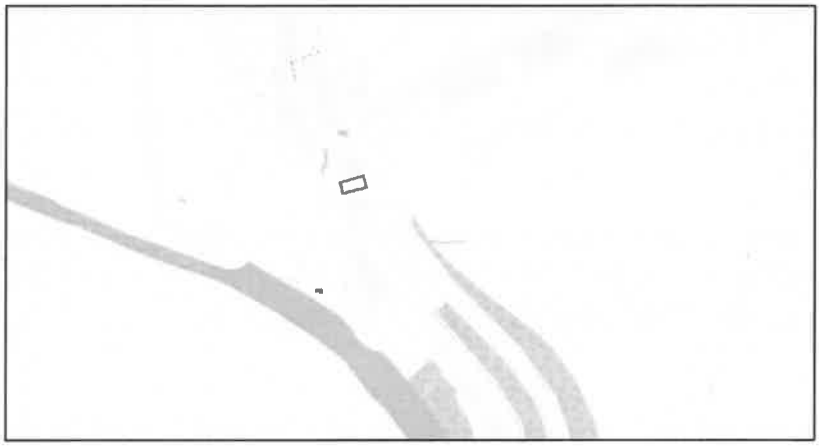

Figure 1 showing the location of the site

Description of Development

1.2 The site will be the subject of a planning application with Ribble Valley Borough Council for a loft conversion, rear extension and internal reconfiguration.

Biodiversity in Planning

1.3 Biodiversity is a material consideration, and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have a requirement to consider biodiversity and protected species when determining planning applications. Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) 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.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Daytime Bat Survey

2.1 A daytime bat survey of the site 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.

Personnel and Seasonal Timing

2.4 Sam Harmer (Ecologist) carried out the daytime bat survey on the 1st November 2021. Sam is experienced and fully trained in protected species surveys and holds a Natural England Class 2 Survey Licence for bats (licence reference no.: 2020-49406-CLS-CLS). The weather at the time of the survey was dry, mild and calm.

Survey Constraints

2.5 Daytime bat surveys can be conducted at any time of the year. The property was fully accessible. There were no constraints to the survey.

3.0 RESULTS

Site Description

3.1 1 Southport Barn Cottages, Clitheroe is a two-storey semi-detached residential building, at the end of a row of cottages. The walls of the property are constructed from stone. The property has a simple symmetrical gable roof structure, with a slate roof. The property has a conservatory to the rear.

External Assessment

3.2 The external walls are in excellent condition. The stonework on the front and side elevations of the property is all in place and intact with complete mortar (see Photograph 1). The pebbledash on the rear elevation of the property is in good condition and free from cracks or damage (see Photograph 2). The window and door frames are flush to the surrounding masonry, offering no cavities for bats to roost within.

Photograph 1 showing the walls on the front and side elevations

Photograph 2 showing the rear elevation of the property

3.3 The roof of the building is pitched and covered with slate tiles. These are all in position and lie flush to one another. The ridge tiles are all in position and well-sealed with mortar (see Photograph 3).

Photograph 3 showing the roof of the building

3.4 Visible gaps are present beneath the eaves of the roof at the front of the property, creating potential access points for bats (see Photographs 4 and 5).

Photograph 4 showing a gap underneath the eaves of the roof

Photograph 5 showing another gap underneath the eaves of the roof

Internal Assessment

3.5 The internal living spaces are in use and do not offer suitable bat roosting habitat. The building has one large and accessible roof void, which covers the expanse of the roof space. The roof void houses the boiler and is lit by strip lighting. The wooden roof joists are mostly intact, without gaps or cracks for bats to use (see Photographs 6 and 7). The roof is lined throughout, and this is complete, with no significant tears or rips.

Photograph 6 showing the roof void

Photograph 7 showing the roof joists

3.6 The roof void is insulated to the floor and timber boards cover the floor. The internal brickwork and stonework do not meet the roof, creating cavities (see Photographs 8 and 9). No daylight is present at the roof edges. A small amount of bat droppings (<10) were found inside the void, scattered on the floor. A small number of rodent droppings were also found.

Photograph 8 showing cavities in the brickwork around the timber

Photograph 9 showing cavities in the stonework

4.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Evidence of bat activity in the form of a small number of bat droppings was found in the roof void of 1 Southport Barn Cottages. The property has gaps at the roof eaves, which would allow bast access into the roof void. The roof void is in use and lit by strip lighting. Gaps do occur within the internal stone and brickwork. Given the small amount of evidence found, it is considered the building is unlikely to support a bat roost of high conservation value, such as a maternity roost.

4.2 The building is considered to offer moderate bat roost suitability. Further bat survey work is required to determine if an active roost is present, and if so, the species of bat and the type of roost present. It is recommended that a minimum of two dusk emergence/dawn re-entry surveys are undertaken at the building at an optimal time of year (between May and September).

4.3 The results of the surveys will determine the type of bat mitigation and compensation habitat required. This could be, for example, a dedicated bat loft or a few bat boxes.

4.4 If a confirmed bat roost is present, a bat mitigation licence will be required prior to the commencement of works. The licence can be sought following the granting of planning permission. It is probable that the site will qualify for a Low Impact Class Licence for bats.

4.5 No evidence of other protected species, such as nesting birds, was found within the building. The habitats to the rear comprise mainly amenity grassland and are not suitable for protected species.

5.0 REFERENCES

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