

Mr A Hussain
4 Branch Road
Mellor Brook
Blackburn
BB2 7NU

5th April 2023

Dear Mr Hussain

Re: Proposed development at 4 Branch Road, Mellor Brook, BB2 7NU

Thank you for your request for a bat survey.

We understand that the proposal is for first floor extensions; one to the north (side) elevation and one south (rear) elevation.

1.0 Background and Qualifications

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

Pat is a licensed bat worker, a registered consultant of the Bat Mitigation Class licence in England, 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-five years, including over 18 years as Director of Ecology Services UK Limited. This work includes provision of expert advice and guidance to bodies such as Statutory Nature Conservation Organisations, Local Planning Authorities, including Lancashire Planning Authorities and Police Authority, as well as the delivery of professional training courses about bats at a national level.

Pat has recognised and extensive knowledge of bat ecology relating to buildings and trees, including the requirements and conditions necessary for bat roosting. He also has recognised skills relating to bat 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 nineteen years' 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 relating to professional bat work throughout England

and Wales, including building and tree surveys, assessments and judgements of value in relation to bats, as well as selection and monitoring of mitigation features.

Pat and Janette meet the requirements for knowledge, skills and practical experience as outlined in the CIEEM technical guidance (Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (2013) *Competencies for Species Survey: Bats*. CIEEM, Winchester, Hants).

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 likelihood of bats being present at the building, a daytime inspection of the building and its surroundings was carried out on 4th April 2023.

Observations were made from ground level, as well as from telescopic ladders, to examine potential roost features. A Ridgid CA300 endoscope was available but not required during the survey. A Coast HP 10R 1000 lumens torch and close-focussing Zeiss Victory FL 8x42 binoculars were also used as aids to visibility.

The survey was compliant with the current best practice guidance, as detailed in Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

2.1 Limitations

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

The presence and behaviour of species, especially mobile species such as bats and birds, can change over time. Ecology surveys are therefore always time-limited in their currency.

Part of the roof void could not be accessed but it was visible through gaps in the dividing wall which provided sufficient space to make a visual examination, with use of torches and camera.

The roof could not be examined in detail due to the height of the building and the associated measures required for a safe inspection. However, all of the external roof coverings were visible through binoculars at ground level, and this enabled an assessment to be made in relation to potential roosting areas for bats.

3.0 Results of the Survey

4 Branch Road is a two storey, detached dwelling house, constructed of brick walls with part render and upvc cladding to the rear (east elevation). There is a dual pitched roof with chimney at the gables and a hipped roof above an existing two storey extension; both are covered with slate. There are two flat roofs (location of proposed extensions) covered with roof liner and a small mono pitch tiled roof above a bay section, to the west. All windows and doors are upvc and there is mix of timber and upvc soffits and fascias along the roof edges.

There is a large roof void, spilt in two sections by an internal brick wall. The roof void section to the north is underlined with plaster boards and there are boards throughout the floor which is used for storage. The roof void section to the south is part underlined with modern roof membrane (eastern aspect) and unlined on the western aspect. There is deep rock wool on the floor.

All external and internal features on the house, including the roof coverings, are well sealed with only a very small number of gaps present. These gaps are associated with the soffit along the front (west) elevation and occasional gaps due to the natural fit of the slate roof coverings only.

Habitats and surroundings

The proposed development site lies within a residential area in the village of Mellor Brook, to the north west of Blackburn Town Centre. There is a hardstanding driveway with managed privet hedging to the west (front garden). The rear garden to the east comprises mown lawn with managed boundary hedges, Leylandii trees, planted shrubs, a fish pond and paved areas.

There are other residential dwellings with gardens to the north and south and large open fields with gappy hedgerows, mature trees and tree belts to the immediate east. The landscape features provide potential shelter and foraging resources for use by bat and bird populations in the immediate and wider surroundings.

The levels of artificial lighting are expected to be moderate based on the density of housing and street lighting.

Bats

No bats or evidence of bats was found during the daytime inspection.

Potential roosting features for bats are:

Night roosting

Negligible potential – there are no suitable night roosting features

Day roosting

Low potential – very small number of potential access gaps associated with soffit (west elevation) and natural fit of the slate roof coverings.

Hibernation roosting

Low potential – very small number of potential access gaps associated with soffit (west elevation) and natural fit of the slate roof coverings.

The assessment above reflects the condition of the features and their environment. It is the professional judgement of Ecology Services UK Ltd that no further surveys are warranted at this time.

Nesting birds

No bird nests or bird nesting material were found during the survey.

There is high potential for nesting birds to utilise the boundary vegetation including Leylandii trees, ivy and privet hedges during the bird nesting season (February to September). This vegetation is close enough to the proposed development site to be potentially subject to disturbance during the proposed works.

4.0 Advice and Recommendations

4.1 Bats

Protected Species	Impacts, Issues & Rationale	Action Required
Bats	<p>There are no known impacts to bat roosts as a result of the proposed development.</p> <p>It is advised that there are a small number of potential roost features suitable for bats associated with soffit and slate roof coverings. In this location and landscape setting, these features have low potential for bats to use throughout the year.</p> <p>All bat species and bat roosts are afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019</p>	<p>Advice (mitigation): All personnel involved in the proposed development should be carefully advised about bats, 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.</p> <p>Advice (mitigation): As a precaution, it is advised that when removal or disturbance of potential roost features such as soffits and roof coverings are to take place, this should be done carefully by hand. At all times.</p> <p>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.</p>

Table 1 Bats

4.2 Nesting birds

Protected species	Impacts, Issues & Rationale	Action Required
Nesting birds	<p>There are potential impacts (disturbance, damage and destruction) to nesting birds, nests and eggs as a result of the proposed works.</p> <p>It is advised that there is high potential for birds to be nesting within the adjacent garden vegetation during the bird nesting season (February to September).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Advice (mitigation): It is advised that the most appropriate way to address the risk to nesting birds is:</p> <p>Avoid disturbance to the building and garden vegetation during the nesting season.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>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).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

Table 2 Nesting Birds

Compliance with the actions outlined in the tables above will help to avoid committing offences in relation to protected species (bats and nesting birds).

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 being present but further investigative surveys are not required prior to development works.

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

Yours sincerely



Janette Gazzard MCIEEM
Senior Ecologist
Ecology Services UK Ltd



Image showing west (front) elevation at 4 Branch Road



Image showing east (rear) elevation at 4 Branch Road



Image showing rear garden with boundary vegetation (example of potential bird nesting area indicated by red arrow) in close proximity to proposed first floor extension i.e. above the flat roof



Image showing roof void with dividing brick wall, plaster boards and modern roof membrane roof liner



Image showing roof void used for storage