

Bat Roosting Assessment

Garden Fields
Stevenage road
St Ippolyts

June 2018

On behalf of:
Mr Gary Jones
Garden Fields
Stevenage Road
St Ippolyts
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Declaration

This report has been produced following the guidelines published by

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Special Note

Whilst every effort has been taken to ensure this report accurately identifies potential ecological constraints to development or the likely presence or absence of species and the spatial and temporal use of the site by such species, it must only be viewed as a snap shot in time and reflects the ecological status of the site at the time of survey.

No liability can be assumed for ecological changes that may or may not occur on the surveyed site after the production of this report. The author of this report must be consulted as to the current applicability of the report if there are any seasonal delays in the use of this report.

This report can only be used for the purposes for which it was instructed and agreed at the time of commission.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Report

1.1.1 ELMAW Consulting, Consultant Ecologists and Wildlife Biologists have been commissioned by the applicant and homeowner, Mr Gary Jones, to carry out a Preliminary Bat Roosting Assessment of a residential property known as Garden Fields, on Stevenage Road in St Ippolyts, near Hitchin, in north Hertfordshire.

1.1.2 The findings will be used to support a planning application to demolish the building which will include precautionary mitigation considered advisable for the protection of bats whilst the proposed works are carried out.

1.2 Proposed Works

1.2.1 Planning permission is being sought for the demolition of the current residential property (Garden Fields) and its replacement with a new dwelling on the same plot. It is proposed to demolish the property once planning permission has been granted, within 2018.

1.3 Site Context

1.3.1 Garden Fields is located within the village of St Ippolyts, in north Hertfordshire, on Stevenage Road at postcode SG4 7PE. St Ippolyts lies between the large towns of Hitchin to the north-west and Stevenage to the south-east. The grid reference of the site is TL199269.

1.3.2 Around Garden Fields, the surrounding landscape comprises pastures to the south, the village to the west and north and the Wymondley Transforming Station to east.



Plate 1 – Aerial photo showing indicative location of Garden Fields, St Ippolyts

GoogleEarthPro licence no. JCPM1QZUX6HR1KA

2.0 Methodology & Technical Approach

2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 Bat records from a radius of two kilometres around the application site have been sourced from The Hertfordshire Environmental Record Centre (HERC) on the 21st May 2018. In addition, all officially designated sites of nature conservation interest and importance (both statutory and non-statutory) relating to bats have been identified within a 2km radius of the application site. The results of the data search request were received on the 22nd May 2018.

2.1.2 Google earth aerial photographs and DEFRA's Magic Map Application images have been examined of the application site and surrounding landscape as have the relevant Ordnance Survey Explorer Maps at a 1:25,000 scale.

2.2 Surveyor Information

2.2.1 The Preliminary Bat Roosting Assessment was undertaken by Mr Keith Seaman, Principal Wildlife Biologist with ELMAW Consulting and Natural England Survey & Research bat surveyor Level 2 licence holder (licence registration number 2015-15559-CLS-CLS).

2.3 Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

2.3.1 The specified and adopted methodology for this survey has been carried out in accordance with the guidelines published by The Bat Conservation Trust (*Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines,* 3rd Edition The Bat Conservation Trust, 2016).

2.3.2 It must be acknowledged however, that whilst we endeavour to follow the guidelines, we reserve the right to adapt the survey methodology where appropriate as the aforementioned guidelines state that these guidelines should be interpreted and adapted on a case-by-case

basis according to site-specific conditions and professional judgement and examples given are not prescriptive but descriptive.

2.3.3 Equipment available for use included;

- ATP Instrumentation mini vane thermos-anemometer
- Lancelab telescopic camera
- Rigid Micro CA-300 hand-held inspection endoscopic camera
- small light and mirrors
- binoculars
- collapsible ladder

2.3.4 Garden Fields has been assessed for bat roosting potential based, in part, on the following factors which potentially increase the likelihood of roosting bats; more favorable roosting conditions may include features such as:

- Surrounding feeding and foraging habitat
- The presence of architectural features such as roof voids, lofts/attics, bargeboards, soffits, lead-flashing, hanging tiles, cavity walls, weather boarding, mortice and tenon jointed roof timbers and ridge tiles and beams
- Lined clay tile or slate roofs
- The presence of potential access points such as cracks, voids crevices and flight openings
- Complex roofs and orientations and wall elevations
- Internal environmental conditions and temperatures

2.3.5 The building inspection was carried out on the 1st June 2018. It was carried out by the report's author Mr Keith Seaman in good weather conditions, with clear skies, a very light breeze and a temperature of 17°c.

2.4 Assessment & Mitigation

2.4.1 The assessment and valuation of the survey findings and subsequent mitigation and compensatory strategy (if required), is based on advice and guidance published by The Bat Conservation Trust and Natural England in *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition 2016, Bat Workers' Manual 2004* and *Bat Mitigation Guidelines* 2004.

3.0 Results

3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 Within the 2km radius data search zone, there are no internationally or statutorily protected sites of nature conservation importance.

3.1.2 There are a number of non-statutory Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) within the data search area. Of these, two are designated for their importance to bat species. Maydencroft Manor Farm, Gosmore (file code: 20/074) which is approximately 1.7km to the west of Garden Fields and St Ibbs Bush (file code: 20/072), which lies approximately 420m to the south-west of Garden Fields.

3.1.3 Four species of bat; common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Natterer's (*Myotis nattereri*), brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), and noctule *(Nyctalus noctula)* are all recorded within the two kilometre radius data search zone. In addition, there are several records of unidentified bats.

3.1.4 Unfortunately, only four-figure grid references were provided for the bat records, so the exact location of each species recorded was not possible to ascertain. The closest records however are of common pipistrelles, brown long-eared bats and unidentified bats - from the same 1km grid square as Garden Fields. There are no specific records of bat from the application site.

3.2 Relevant Planning Policy & Legislation

National Planning Policy Framework

3.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) superseded Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9) in March 2012. The NPPF states that the planning system should 'contribute to and enhance' the natural and local environment by, in part;

- Minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

3.2.2 The key principle of the NPPF which relates to bats is;

- *The recovery of priority species populations*

3.3 Local Plan Policies

3.3.1 The North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with alterations (September 2007) is the current local level policy guidance covering the site. The following policy from the document is partially relevant to this study;

Policy 14 – Nature Conservation

….. *Elsewhere or when a development proposal is acceptable, the Council will expect development proposals to take account of and, where possible, to show improvements to the nature conservation value of the site and its surroundings. In addition, the Council may require the preparation and implementation of a management scheme to maintain or enhance the site's nature conservation value'.*

3.4 Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

3.4.1 Garden Fields is a detached two-storey residential property approximately, 40 years of age. It has an open garden to the front and rear of the house and further residential properties are found adjacent on either side of the property.

3.4.2 The house is constructed from brick with a modern cement pan-tiled roof with ridge tiles and a single chimney with lead flashing. Windows and doors are modern UPVc and sealed into their brick surrounds. A

box soffit is found below the roof eaves which continues on both gable ends of the house.

3.4.3 There is a small flat-roofed single-storey extension on the southern and north-eastern elevation. The flat roof is capped with metal and there is some shiplap above the windows.

3.4.4 Internally, the house has an attic which runs the length of the building. Flush-jointed rafters support the roof which is lined with bitumastic felt over loft insulation. Block walling is found exposed on both gable ends of the house and there is a ridge beam which runs the length of the attic.




Plates 2 & 3: Front and rear views of Garden Fields




Plates 4 & 5: Views of the attic

3.4.5 The roof was found to be in a sealed condition; there are no missing or dislodged roof or ridge tiles and no mortar from the ridge of the two gable end verges was found to be missing. There is one ventilation ridge tile but this vent is covered in a fine mesh. The cement pan tiles

closest to the eaves appear open and available to roosting bats however these tiles are fixed to supports which deny bat access any further than the immediate opening of the pan tiles making them unsuitable for roosting bats. The box soffits surrounding the entire building were found to be completely sealed to the brick wall precluding any potential access by bats to the area behind the soffits. Lead flashing around the chimney was also found to be flat and sealed precluding its use by bats and all windows and doors are completely sealed into their surrounding frames and brickwork. No potential bat access was found on the exterior of the building.

3.4.6 Internally, the attic was found to be sealed and no bats or indicative evidence of bats was found; there were no bat droppings on any of the surfaces, on the floor or stuck to the block gable end walls. There was no evidence to indicate that the attic is being used by roosting bats at this time.

3.4.7 The entire building was found to have no discernible bat roosting potential and therefore a negligible potential bat roosting value has been concluded.

3.5 Limitations of Survey

3.5.1 The Preliminary Bat Roosting Assessment survey was completed in ideal weather conditions; dry, with little wind and in temperatures above 10°C. Therefore the environmental conditions of the survey did not constrain or limit the results. Survey methods, timings and equipment used are in line with industry standards as advocated by Natural England and the Bat Conservation Trust.

4.0 Evaluation

4.1 Analysis & Interpretation of Results

4.1.1 The survey found no discernible bat roosting potential; the entire building lacked any possible places in which bats could potentially enter and exit the building structure. In addition, no indicative evidence such as bat droppings, fur staining or urine droppings were found. It is therefore concluded that Garden Fields supports no indicative evidence to suggest the building supports roosting bats at this time.

5.0 Impact Assessment

5.1 Assessment of Impacts of the Proposed Development

5.1.1 The lack of potential bat roosting features on the exterior of Garden Fields, taken together with the results of the internal inspection of the attic, has led to the conclusion that the building has a negligible value to roosting bats at this time.

5.1.2 The proposals are for the demolition of Garden Fields and its replacement with a new dwelling on the same plot.

5.1.3 Given the conclusion of a negligible bat roosting potential, the potential for the demolition of Garden Fields to impact on bats and their roost is also deemed to be very low. In accordance with Policy 14 – Nature Conservation, it is considered that this survey and subsequent report complies with the Local Plan policy and has demonstrated the redevelopment of the site will not result in a net loss of biodiversity, in compliance with the NPPF.

6.0 Required Actions

6.1 *Further Surveys*

6.1.1 No further survey work is deemed necessary at this time.

6.2 *Mitigation*

6.2.1 Neither bats nor their roosts are predicted to be impacted upon as a result of the proposed works. However, the transitory nature of roosting bats, particularly non-breeding and male bats can result in the occupation of buildings at any time in the future. Whilst this potential eventuality is considered to be very low because of the lack of discernible roosting features on site, a watching brief by the licensed bat Ecologist will be maintained throughout the site's redevelopment. In addition, a hand demolition of the roof tiles is planned, immediately prior to demolition, as the roof tiles are to be kept and re-used.

6.2.2 This careful hand removal of all the roof tiles and lead flashing around the chimney will ensure that in the unlikely event of a bat being present, it can be removed safely by the licensed bat Ecologist. Work will then cease and a European Protected Species licence applied for in order to destroy the roost.

6.3 *Compensation*

6.3.1 In accordance with both the Local Plan Policy 14 – Nature Conservation and the NPPF, it is proposed to enhance the biodiversity of the Garden Fields site through the creation of new bat roosting opportunities. It is proposed to install a single Schwegler 1FF bat box (or similar) on the western elevation of the newly constructed dwelling. This will provide roosting opportunities for both common and soprano pipistrelle bats, which are known to frequent the local area.

6.4 Further Considerations

6.4.1 All species of bat, to a greater or lesser degree, use their places of shelter in a temporal and spatial way which may affect the status of a site or building at any given time. Roost sites which may appear temporarily vacated or abandoned could be re-occupied at any time in the future.

6.4.2 Therefore, following the production of this report, should the demolition of Garden Fields be delayed for 12 months from the date of this survey, the building must be re-assessed and re-surveyed. This will ensure that, should the status of the building change in the intervening months, the presence of bats can be taken into account to ensure the redevelopment commences lawfully. Should the redevelopment require a derogation of the Habitats Regulations and an EPS development licence, the bat status of the current season of development will be required to support a licence application.

7.0 References

Bat Conservation Trust. (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition,* Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Altringham, J.D. (2003). *British Bats.* HarperCollins Publishers. London.

English Nature. (2004), *Bat Mitigation Guidelines,* English Nature, Peterborough.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee. (2004), *Bat Workers' Manual*, JNCC, Peterborough.

8.0 Appendix 1

8.1 Legislation Relating to Bats

8.1.1 All bats and their roosts in the UK are protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

8.1.2 In England the legislation makes it illegal to;

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat,
- Deliberately disturb a bat which is likely to impair their ability to survive, breed or reproduce, rear or nurture their young, hibernate, migrate or affect significantly their local distribution or abundance
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat
- Possess, control, transport, sell, exchange or offer for sale or exchange any live or dead bat or any part of a bat

8.1.3 Bats' roosts (including resting places) are protected whether or not bats are present at the time. The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981(as amended) additionally makes it an offence to;

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat at a roost
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a roost

8.1.4 Finally, under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, a duty is placed on all public bodies to promote and enhance biodiversity in all its functions. There is a general biodiversity duty in the NERC Act (Section 40) which requires every public body in the exercising of its functions to 'have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'. Section 41 draws up lists of species of principal

importance to which special attention must be given and a number of bats are included in this list.