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Bat Scoping Survey to

Lightridge House
Lightridge Road
Huddersfield
HD2 2HF

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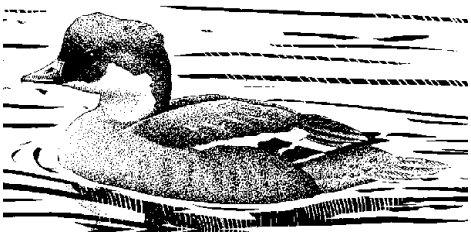

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1. Summary

1.1 A bat scoping and activity survey has been carried out to Lightridge House, Fixby to determine if there are features that have potential to be used by roosting bats and whether bats are present. The survey is required as part of the planning application process and was undertaken at the end of the optimal time for bat occupancy, and therefore aimed to establish the likelihood of bats in the building. The application seeks to demolish the existing dwelling and replace with 3no new build.

1.2 The building is a large, detached period dwelling in large, mature gardens in a semi-urban area but within easy reach if excellent foraging habitat. The roof is a shallow pitched hipped design covered with stone roof tiles and is sound and appears to be without missing or slipped tiles and all ridge tiles are present and without failed mortar. The house has stone walls that are sound and without structural cracks or cavities and there are no external decorative wooden features that would offer potential roosting features (PRFs). The gutters sit on a wide stone ledge and are probably less suited to bats as emergence from a feature such as this would render them easy targets for potential predators. Internally, the roof is unlined and all back pointing appears present. The small section of ridge shows a heavy build-up of cobwebs and dust and has no light ingress and suggests no use by bats. A large section is boarded and has no evidence of bats such as droppings or scattered prey remains. The internal section makes the roof less appealing to brown long-eared bats and other ridge dwelling species.

1.3 Despite the size of the house and the location, the building offers a very limited number and diversity of potential roosting features. The walls are sound and have no gaps or cracks and the shallow roof is unlined and partially converted and has a roof light. The internal timbers have large mortice joints, but none showed signs of use by bats and there were no scattered droppings. The wall tops are capped with mortar internally and would limit any access from the wall tops. The gutters sit on a broad stone ledge which would make any emerging bat an easy target as it crawled out prior to taking flight. For these reasons, the house has been assessed as being of very low value to bats and it is considered unlikely that the dwelling would support any significant numbers of bats and a nursery roost is unlikely. Bats of a local provenance will be present in good numbers locally and likely to forage throughout the site, but there are many other local dwellings that will offer greater roost potential.

1.4 Given the lack of PRFs, the house is unlikely to support bats in any numbers and is probably unlikely to be used for hibernation given the construction style. Therefore, the house could be demolished during the winter period when bats are least likely to be present and, by following simple precautionary measures, there should be no impact to bats. Stripping the stone roof by hand and leaving a few days before further demolition would ensure that, in the unlikely event of a bat being present, it will have time to wake and leave the property safely. If demolition cannot commence during the winter period (November to end of February), then an emergence survey should be conducted during the optimal period (May to September) by a qualified ecologist using the appropriate surveyor numbers and techniques.

1.5 If the demolition is carried out per the mitigation specified in this report, there should be no impact to bats or bat roosts. There will be some minor loss of foraging habitat as the grounds are cleared. The site’s ability to support roosting bats will be significantly increased with the inclusion of permanent bat roosting features being included in each of the three new dwellings.

2. Introduction

2.1 A bat scoping survey was carried to Lightridge House 30, Lightridge Road, Huddersfield HD2 2HF (NGR SE140196) to determine whether bats have or are using the building as a roost site. The site was also checked for the presence of nesting birds.

2.2 The current proposal seeks planning permission to demolish the existing dwelling and replace with 3no. new builds.

2.3 The survey took place at a time considered to be outside the optimal period for bat occupancy aimed to establish the following:

- The likelihood of bats using the buildings by undertaking a scoping survey.
- Identify any potential roosting features (PRFs).
- Determine if activity surveys are required.
- Provide an impact assessment of the development on bats.
- Define mitigation proposals where required.
- Assess the requirement for a protected species licence.
- Assess the building for use by nesting birds.

3. Methodology

3.1 The site was surveyed in accordance with BCT best practice guidelines and surveyor experience by John Gardner, a surveyor with 43yrs field experience in searching for bats and is registered to use the Class Survey Licence WML CL20 (Level 4). The licence number is 2015-15656-CLS-CLS.

3.2 The exterior of the building was inspected during daylight using torches, binoculars and an endoscope. All normal signs of bats were looked for including bats, dead baby bats, bat droppings, prey remains, scratching and staining of entry and exit holes.

3.3 The building was assessed for its degree of potential to support roosting bats including assessing the building design, construction, materials, and condition. This combined with an assessment of the location of the site and the surrounding habitat in terms of bat suitability allows an assessment to be made as to the potential of the building to support bats. Factors such as the proximity of good foraging areas (woodland, water bodies) and features that link the site to the wider surrounds such as linear features (hedgerows etc) were also considered.

3.4 This report sets out the findings of a daytime scoping survey carried out to the above site on Wednesday 27th September 2023. The report highlights the ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the proposed works and appraises the potential impacts. Appropriate actions to ensure the protection of bats are identified and mitigation measures detailed where appropriate.

4. Survey constraints

4.1 There were no constraints to the survey.

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5. Site Description

5.1 The site consists of a large, period dwelling in its own grounds amid a semi-urban landscape within easy reach of good foraging habitat. There are other residential dwellings close by which also provide potential roosting features and the site is connected to the to the wider landscape by a series of linear features that will allow bats to commute through the site.

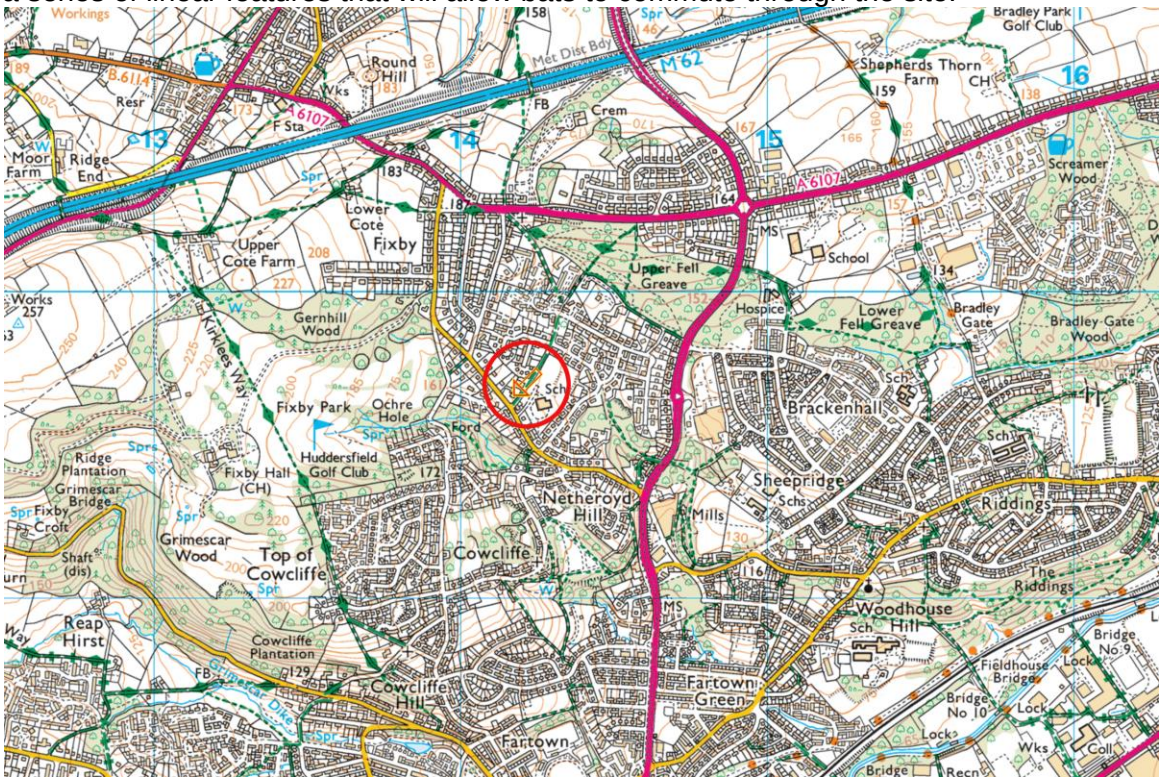

Figure 1. Site location plan

Figure 2 Aerial view of the site, surrounds and specific buildings surveyed.

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6. Desk Study

There are no records relating directly to the site as no previous surveys have been conducted and the site is remote from other dwellings. Although bats of a local provenance will be widespread and in good numbers, records usually relate to bat worker activity rather than bat distribution. There are very few PRFs at this site and so, at this time, no desk surveys have been carried out and none are required as all records are likely to be historical or far enough from this site as to not be affected.

7. Activity surveys

7.1 The scoping survey determined the building has 'low' potential to support roosting bats due to the distinct lack of number and diversity of PRFs. The assessment established bats are unlikely to use the building, particularly in winter, and therefore a method statement detailing demolition in winter when bats are least likely to be present. Should the timescales change for any reason, then an emergence survey will be undertaken by a qualified ecologist during the optimal period.

8. Survey results

Scoping survey

The site comprises a large, period dwelling standing in its own grounds and remote from other dwellings. The building is stone and has a hipped roof with stone covering and is in a very good state of repair.

An internal search of the roof space was undertaken looking for droppings, discarded prey remains or other signs of bats (dead animals etc). The stone roof is hipped and is unlined and all back-pointing is present. The short ridge section is heavily covered with cobwebs and there are no droppings trapped in the webs. Over half the loft space has been boarded out which make searching for evidence an easy task. There were no scattered droppings and there is a roof window allowing light to flood the boarded half of the roof space. The wall tops are ramped with mortar to the first tile and this will prevent access to the wall tops from the outside.

Photo 1: Illustrating roof interior.

Externally, the roof is sound and has no missing or slipped tiles and all ridge tiles and flashings are present and appear sound. The roof is hipped and quite shallow and therefore less likely to appeal to ridge dwelling species and lacks the flight space preferred by brown long-eared bats. There are natural gaps beneath the tiles which could provide roosting spaces for small numbers of bats but unlikely to support a nursery roost.

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Photo 2: Illustrating roof section

The stone walls are rubble-filled and are sound and have no cracks or structural gaps and are very well pointed. Being hipped, there are no gable walls and no decorative wooden features externally. The top of the walls has a wide, protruding flat stone on which the gutters sit, and this offers no potential roosting features.

Photo 3: Showing flat stone gutter support and pointed walls

Photo 4: Showing all four elevations of the house.

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9. Interpretation and analysis

The building was assessed as being of low interest to bats as there are very few potential roost features and they are limited in diversity being mainly beneath roof tiles. Despite the size of the house, there are few places that appear to have obvious roost potential. The shallow roof and short section of ridge is less likely to appeal to ridge dwelling species and there was no evidence of bats inside the loft. The wall tops have a wide, flat ledge running all around the perimeter of the house which limits use at the wall tops. Bats are less likely to use a feature like this as emerging from here would make them very vulnerable to predators. Generally, bats prefer a small cavity with open access that they can enter easily and, more importantly, exit and drop freefall for a short distance to evade potential predators. The roof is unlined and therefore, the main roost potential lies beneath tiles and is unlikely to support large numbers such as a nursery roost. There are no facia boards or other external features that would allow bats to roost.

As there is only a low chance of bats using the house as for roosting, a destructive search during the winter period when bats are much less likely to be present would be an acceptable course of action. The tiles on the roof are likely to be reclaimed and therefore, stripped by hand which would allow a precautionary approach to be made and should a bat be found, it can be removed to safety by a qualified ecologist. A method statement has been suggested which details the way in which a destructive search can be carried out safely.

The proposal is for three new dwellings to be erected on site once the existing dwelling has been removed. The new dwellings should incorporate permanent bat roosting features in the fabric of the buildings that will remain in perpetuity and increased the site's potential to support bats. The location of these features can be marked on the plans for approval.

A method statement has been devised and documented in section 11 which details the measure required to complete the works with the least disturbance or potential harm to bats.

10. Impact assessment

The building has very few potential roosting features despite its size. There is no evidence to suggest that bats have used the building, and the lack of roosting features means that there is less likelihood of bats being harmed by the demolition. If the work is undertaken outside the optimal period for bat occupancy, then there should be no impact on bats or the local bat population. There may be some minor loss of foraging depending on the extent of the ground clearance, though bats will continue to be able to commute through the site.

11. Mitigation and Compensation

The building has no evidence to suggest bats are of have used the site and it is assessed as being of low roost potential. Therefore, there is no requirement for a protected species mitigation licence but compensation for any minor loss of roosting sites should be made.

Timings

- The works to strip the roof shall be undertaken between October and the end of February when bats are least likely to be present and should be completed within that period. If this is unlikely to happen then no works should be carried out until at least one activity survey has been undertaken during the optimal period. Should this be the case, a report will be submitted detailing the results and, if bats are found, then the works will be subject to obtaining a European Protected Species Mitigation License before works can commence.

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Prior to works commencing

- A tool box talk will be given to contractors to make them aware of the possible presence of bats.
- Roof tiles will be stripped by hand by lifting rather than dragging to avoid crushing injuries.
- If any bats are found during the works, work will cease immediately and advise sought from a qualified ecologist.
- Bats will only be handled by an appropriately experienced ecologist.

Compensation and enhancements

- A bat roosting features will be incorporated into the gable apex of the new dwelling on both south and west facing elevations. The exact style and location will be determined and added to the plans.

12. Conclusion

A bat scoping survey carried out to Lightridge House, Huddersfield has assessed the building as being of low bat roost potential as it lacks features that are often associated with bats and their roosts. The work to demolish the dwelling should be carried out during the winter months when bats are least likely to be present. A method statement detailing the actions required to avoid harm or injury to bats has been supplied and should be included in any permissions in regard to this development. Should it not be possible to undertake the roof strip during the winter period, then a single activity survey during the optimal survey period should be carried out prior to any works commencing and a report will be submitted confirming this has been done and advising if there are any results which would impact the application. If bats were found during an activity survey, then the application may be subject to a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence before works commence.