

Weary Friar - Outbuilding, Pillaton, Cornwall.

Preliminary Ecological Assessment Report

March 2021

Client Name:	Mr Ryan West
Version:	1
Survey Date(s):	23 rd March 2021
Report Date:	29 th March 2021
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Quality assurance

This survey work and report has been undertaken with reference to; The publication 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists' Collins, J. (ed) 2016, 3rd edition, Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Description	Ecological Assessment
Produced for	Mr Ryan west
Issue	1
Report Reference	Weary Friar
Date of Survey Work	23/03/21
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Brief Summary

Brookside Ecology was commissioned by Mr Ryan West to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Assessment of an outbuilding at the Weary Friar Public House, Pillaton, Cornwall. The assessment was undertaken to inform proposals in relation to the potential presence of protected species in accordance with local and national planning policy and legislative requirements where it is proposed the building is converted to provide accommodation.

The assessment found the building to be in an area that provides good habitat for wildlife with adjacent natural connective features. Accordingly, the immediate vicinity is assessed as having 'high suitability for bat commuting and foraging habitat.'

The desk study revealed the site is within an 'impact risk zone' of statutory sites designated for their scientific or conservation value although the proposal does not appear to require consultation with Natural England on potential risks to statutory sites.

The building is assessed as having some 'low suitability for roosting bats' with some minimal evidence of their presence within the building. The simple construction type of the building would provide sub-optimal conditions for some bat roost types however their presence in small numbers cannot be ruled out.

The report assesses that development proposals to convert the building for residential use could have potential to impact on bat roosts if they were present. Accordingly, the assessment is guided by survey practice and makes recommendation for further survey work to be undertaken to confirm absence or presence of bat roosts and recommends that a night time emergence survey and a period of automated monitoring is undertaken in the main active bat season between May and August.

Previous seasons birds nests were found in the building and therefore nesting birds will need consideration during the development to avoid their disturbance. The report recommends this is given further consideration once the further survey work related to bats has been completed.

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1. Introduction

1. Brookside Ecology was commissioned by Mr Ryan West to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Assessment of an outbuilding at the Weary Friar, Pillaton, Cornwall at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference (OSGR) SX 366643. The assessment was undertaken to inform proposals in relation to the potential presence of protected species for legislative requirements.

Proposed Development

2. It is proposed that the outbuilding is renovated and converted for additional accommodation.

Objectives

3. The purpose of this preliminary assessment is to:
 - Identify any ecological, bat or other protected or notable species issues that may impact the proposals.
 - Make preliminary recommendations for mitigation and enhancement opportunities where required.
 - Specify further survey work if required in accordance with best practice guidance.

2. Methods

- 2.1. The preliminary assessment of the building was undertaken 23rd March 2021 by Craig Carter and Marcus Pearmain, Natural England registered bat workers.
- 2.2. A visual inspection of the interior and exterior of a building is undertaken for evidence of bat use following standard survey methodologies. The publication 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists'¹ is used for reference and guidance.
- 2.3. Several factors are taken into consideration during an assessment. These include; features present within or on the site that would support roosting bats; the potential for disturbance; lighting impacts; proximity of features to foraging habitat; connectivity to the site between it and the wider countryside.
- 2.4. A thorough examination of the exterior of a building is undertaken to search for evidence of bat use with a visual inspection of structures such as window and door lintels, gaps in walls, lead flashing, fascia boards, ridge, roof and hanging tiles where present. Underneath these features a search for evidence of droppings, staining from urine and fur oil that might indicate use by bats.
- 2.5. The internal search of a building follows a similar approach with a thorough search made of crevices in timber joints, wall sockets and gaps in walls where present. Evidence of bat droppings, urine stains plus prey residues such as fly, butterfly or moth wings and any live bats or bat carcasses that might be present.
- 2.6. Equipment available for use include close-focussing binoculars - Vistron 10 x 40, Endoscope - Scopecam, 3.8 metre extendable ladders and high powered torches – Clulite.
- 2.7. The bat roosting potential of a building is assessed along with the surrounding habitat/commuting features and classified into one of the following categories:

Suitability	Description of roost potential
Negligible	Negligible feature/s likely to be used by roosting bats
Low	Structures with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation).
Moderate	Structures with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
High	Structures with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger number of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.
Roost	Known or confirmed roost

Table 1. Bat roosting potential of buildings/structures, adapted from Collins 2016 (Description of commuting/habitat aspects removed for simplicity)

¹ Collins, J. (ed) 2016, Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines. 3rd edition, Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Other notable species and ecological issues

- 2.8. Full consideration is given to how the development might impact other species and habitats on, and immediately surrounding the development.
- 2.9. In a development such as this the most likely wildlife that might be encountered would be nesting birds and hence a search is made for nests and faecal deposits.

Desk Study

- 2.10. The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website was consulted to identify sites designated for their conservation or biological interest. The Natural England website was used to obtain citation details of statutory sites.
- 2.11. Google satellite view was used to identify habitats of value to protected and notable species including woodland, tree lines and hedgerows, scrub, areas of grassland and waterbodies.

Limitations

- 2.12. None.

3. Legislation & Planning Policy

- 3.1. A brief outline of relevant wildlife legislation is detailed below with a focus on that relevant to the site in question. It is not meant to be an in depth treatise of all wildlife regulations as this is not possible within the scope of this report. It is advised that individuals should seek professional legal advice if necessary.

Bats

- 3.2. All British bats are protected under both UK and EU law; The Habitats Directive, which is transposed into law in England and Wales by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('Habitats Regulations'), as amended.
- 3.3. Regulation 41 (1) of the Regulations makes it an offence to:
- Deliberately capture, injure or kill bat(s);
 - Deliberately disturb bat(s) affecting their ability to survive, breed, rear young or significantly affect local distribution or abundance;
 - Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place, whether present or not;
 - Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat roost;
 - Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to roost sites;
 - Possess, control, transport, sell, exchange or offer for sale or exchange, live or dead bats, or parts thereof.
- 3.7. Some rare bat species, namely Greater Horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, Lesser Horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, Barbastelle *Barbastellus barbastellus* and Bechstein's *Myotis bechsteinii*, are afforded greater protection under European legislation, being listed under Annex II of the EC Habitats Directive which lists species whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

Birds

- 3.8. All wild birds are protected under the Habitats Regulations. Under this legislation it is an offence to:
- Kill, injure or take any wild bird;
 - Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built; and
 - Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

National Planning Policy

- 3.6. The relevant adopted policy at the national level is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as amended 2019, which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. This emphasises the need for planning authorities to consider biological conservation and the need for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity within planning policies and decisions. Specific sections of particular relevance to development include:
- 3.7. Paragraph 175 states; when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:
- 3.8. a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- 3.9. b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be

permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

- 3.10. c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- 3.11. d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

4. Results

Weather

4.1. Dry, 90% Cloud Cover, Temperature 10°C, Wind speed Beaufort <1

Site Context



Figure 1. Red marker indicates location of site

4.2. The site is located within the village of Pillaton in East Cornwall approximately 91m above sea level. It is surrounded by established residential development and fields of grassland to the north. There would be low levels of light pollution in the area. The northern bordering hedges would provide connective features that could aid commuting wildlife to move between site and countryside.



Plate 1. Google satellite view, red area indicates building

Building



Plate 2. North-western elevation

- 4.3. The building (Plates 2,3,4, Figure 2) is a detached, single storey, concrete block and stone building divided into two sections with a corrugated iron roof adjacent to a minor road to its south-western elevation and against a hedge bank on its South-eastern elevation (Plate 3). There are timber doors with large gaps above and open windows large enough to provide easy access to bats and birds to the interior.
- 4.4. Externally the walls are generally well rendered/pointed but with occasional crevices noted large to provide potential access to bats. There is hanging Ivy *Hedera helix* to walls that would provide potential bird nesting opportunity.
- 4.5. Internally the building has a concrete floor and it is open to the underside of the roof with a small mezzanine area to the southern section. Wall crevices were noted to gable end walls. Three Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* nests were noted within the roof of the southern section and bird faeces was present across surfaces. The search of the building identified a small number of bat droppings (4 or 5 whole and fragments) widely spread across surfaces considered a number of months old. No fresh or recent droppings were found.



Plate 3. South-eastern elevation



Plate 4. Northern elevation



Plate 5. Open window



Plate 6. Gaps above doors



Plate 7. Interior roof



Plate 8. Crevices above wall tops



Plate 9. Wall crevices



Plate 10. Barn Swallow nest to roof timber

Desk Study

- 4.6. The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website was consulted and revealed the site is within 'impact risk zone' of statutory sites. However, this proposal does not appear to require the planning authority to consult Natural England on potential risks to such sites.
- 4.7. The search within a 1 kilometre radius of the site revealed no sites designated for their wildlife or conversation value.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 5.1. The assessment found the building to be in an area that provides good habitat for wildlife with adjacent natural connective features and low levels of light pollution. The area is assessed as having 'high suitability for bat commuting and foraging habitat.'
- 5.2. The desk study revealed the site is within an 'impact risk zone' of statutory sites designated for their scientific or conservation value. Impact risk zones are used in the assessment of planning applications for likely impacts on SSSIs, SACs, Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites. This proposal does not appear to fall into one of the identified risk categories that might require the local planning authority to consult Natural England on the likely risks to designated sites.
- 5.3. The building is assessed as having some 'low suitability for roosting bats' with some minimal evidence of their presence within the building. The relatively small number of bat droppings found was not considered to provide strong evidence of the building being a significant bat roost site however. The simple construction type of the building would provide sub-optimal conditions for some bat roost types however their presence in small numbers in wall crevices and within the roof during the summer cannot be ruled out.
- 5.4. In consideration of development proposals to convert the building, these have potential to impact on bat roosts if they were present in the building. Accordingly, we are guided by survey practice to make recommendation for further survey work to confirm absence or presence of bat roosts. If active roosts are found to be present by the further survey work, this would additionally seek to identify all bat species present and character of the roost(s) as well as entry and exit points in order to inform an appropriate mitigation strategy and a European Protected Species Licence application to Natural England, if required.
- 5.5. Previous seasons birds nests were found in the building and therefore nesting birds will need consideration during the development to avoid their disturbance whilst nesting as well as providing compensatory nest sites post development. It is recommended this is given further consideration once the further survey work related to bats has been completed.

Further Survey

- 5.6. It is recommended a single emergence survey and a period of automated monitoring is undertaken in the period between May and August in the main active season for bats in accordance with survey practice.

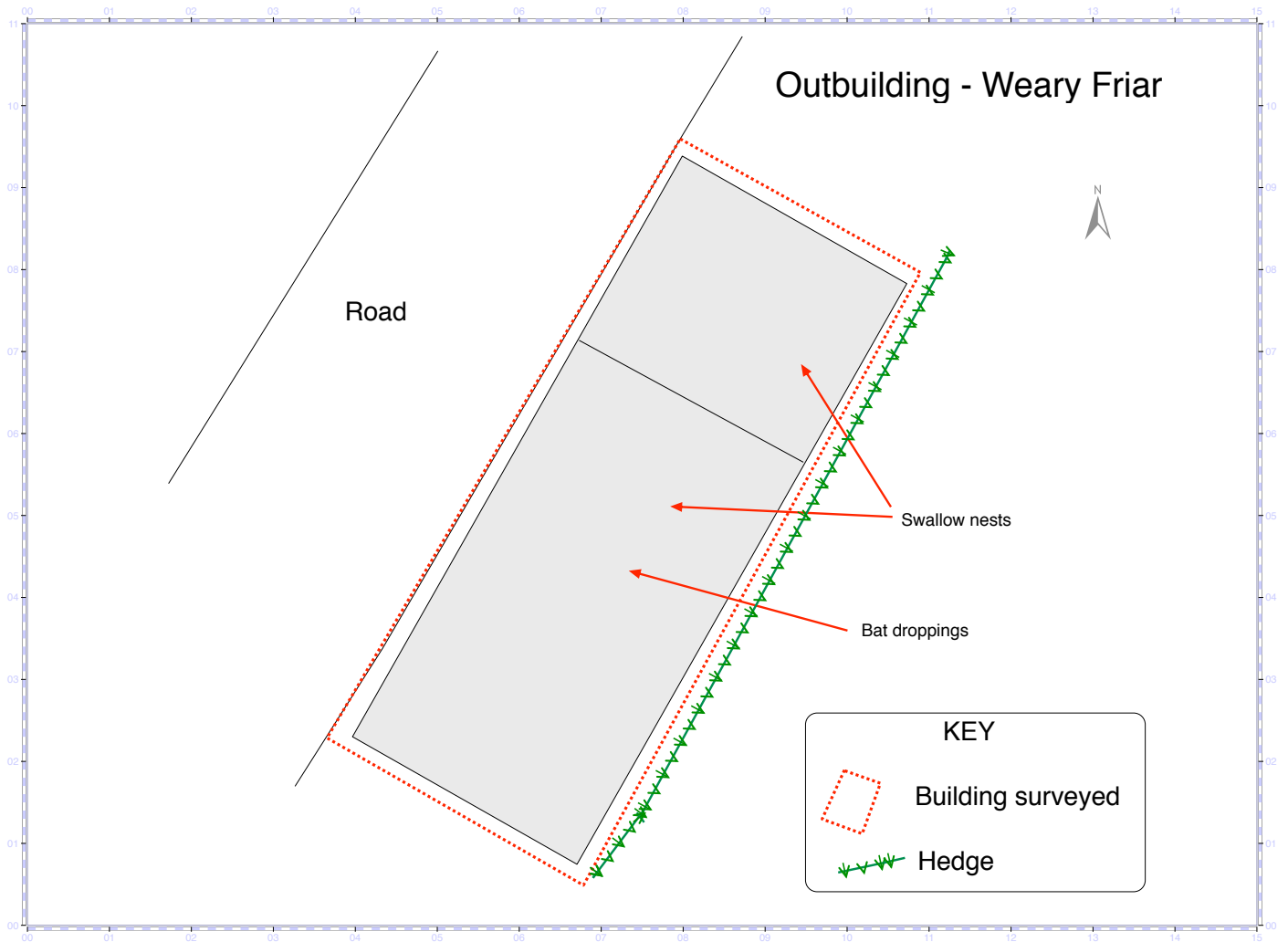


Figure 2. Simplified building plan showing