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27 June 2006

Mr R Hilliard
Hilliard Homes Ltd
Three Bays Farm
Canewdon Road
Canewdon
Essex
SS4 3JN

Dear Mr Hilliard

Re: Bat Survey at 58 Victoria Avenue, Rayleigh

Further to our meeting earlier today, please find enclosed two copies for the above site, together with a copy on disk and an invoice to cover my involvement with this project. As you will see, I found no evidence of the presence of bats and therefore this issue should not influence the planning process.

Yours sincerely

John Dobson
Essex Mammal Surveys

Bat Survey
of
58 Victoria Avenue
Rayleigh

On behalf of:

Hilliard Homes Ltd
Three Bays Farm
Canewdon Road
Canewdon
Essex
SS4 3JN

Prepared by:

John Dobson B.Sc
Essex Mammal Surveys

June 2006

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1) Summary

A detached bungalow at 58 Victoria Avenue, Rayleigh, Essex was investigated during a site visit on 27th June 2006 to ascertain whether it been used by bats. The survey showed that much of the roof volume was taken up with a dormer window, leaving an L-shaped roof void of triangular cross section. The roof void had no evidence of the presence of roosting bats and the number of cobwebs in the loft space would have been a deterrent to colonisation by bats. There was also no evidence of bats on the rendered walls of the property (where their presence would have been readily apparent) and the absence of crevices in the soffits of the building meant that there were no potential roosting places available for bats.

The vegetation in the garden comprised five oak trees, an ash and poplar and dense hawthorn and blackthorn scrub. It is understood that the oaks are to remain and, although there were no potential roosting places such as crevices, loose bark or woodpecker holes in the mature trees, it is probable that bats from nearby roosts will forage in this and adjacent gardens. This behaviour would be expected to continue on the developed site and therefore it is considered that the development of this site will not have a detrimental effect on the local bat population.

2) Introduction

Essex Mammal Surveys were requested to carry out a survey of a residential property at 58 Victoria Avenue, Rayleigh to investigate for signs indicating the presence of bat colonies and roosts. The identification of such roosts is vital in the proposed development of a site to comply with existing legislation and also allows any work that may otherwise be detrimental to bats to be appropriately scheduled. John Dobson, a bat worker and trainer licensed by English Nature, (Licence No. 20060030), carried out the survey on 27th June 2006.

3) Legislation and planning policy relating to bats in the UK

All bat species in Britain are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 through inclusion on Schedule 5. They are also protected under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (which were issued under the European Communities Act 1972), through inclusion on Schedule 2. These make it illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats or to obstruct access to, damage or destroy bat roosts. Under the law, a roost is any structure or place used for shelter or protection. Because bats tend to re-use the same roosts, the roost is protected whether or not the bats are present at the time.

This legislation provides defences so that necessary operations may be carried out in places used by bats, provided the appropriate Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (in England this is English Nature) is notified and allowed a reasonable time to advise on whether the proposed operation should be carried out and, if so, the approach to be used. The UK is a signatory to the Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe, set up under the Bonn Convention. The Fundamental Obligations of Article III of this Agreement require the protection of all bats and their habitats, including the identification and protection from damage or disturbance of important feeding areas for bats.

The presence of a protected species should also be a material consideration in decisions made by a local planning authority on individual planning applications and appeals, according to the Government's Planning Policy Guidance: Nature Conservation note, PPG 9, (now PPS 9) October 1994.

Since September 2000, building development that affects bats or their roosts needs a Development Licence under the Habitats Regulations (1994), administered in England by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

4) Methods

The exterior surfaces of the property were examined for any signs of use as bat roosts, such as the presence of droppings on walls, windows or staining around roost entrances. The use of a crevice by a colony of bats produces droppings on brickwork and adjacent surfaces close to the crevice, together with an accumulation of droppings beneath the roost entrance. However, upon examination, many surfaces will have one or two droppings, randomly placed, caused by bats seeking out new roost sites.

The internal survey was conducted using a powerful torch. The roof voids of the structure were searched for evidence of roosting, the floor area for droppings and the beams for crevices and staining indicative of the presence of roosting bats.

5) Results

The property is a small, detached bungalow with a large dormer window on the eastern side of the roof. The walls are rendered and form a tight seal along the soffits of the building. No evidence of the presence of bats could be found on the exterior walls of the building or in the roof void. Access to the L-shaped roof void was via a door at the top of the stairs. The void, which was of triangular cross section, had no evidence of the presence of bats and the extent of the cobwebs present along some of the rafters would have been a deterrent to colonisation by bats.

6) Discussion

Bats are inquisitive, highly mobile animals, which constantly investigate their surroundings, evaluating good feeding areas and potential roosting opportunities. Where suitable habitat such as woodland, woodland edge or sheltered pasture occurs, bats will travel up to several kilometres to take advantage of this resource. To reach favoured sites, small bats will follow linear landscape features such as hedgerows, streams and lanes etc. The absence of such features can make an otherwise suitable site inaccessible to bats. In addition, new roosts will become established in such areas - examples being the rapid colonisation of artificial roost boxes placed in conifer forests or the occupation of new houses by nursery colonies of pipistrelle bats within a year or two of their completion.

Although no evidence of bats was found, it is expected that foraging bats from nearby roosts may visit the site to feed, particularly in the surrounding gardens where there are several mature trees. This behaviour would be expected to continue on the developed site.

It is considered that development of this site will not have a detrimental effect on the local bat population.

7) Review of existing records of bats in the area

Since the early 1980s, the Essex Bat Group has monitored the status and distribution of bats in this area. Records occurring within a 2km radius of the site are as follows:

TQ780935	12/7/01	pipistrelle droppings in Rawreth church
TQ783917	12/7/01	common pipistrelle recorded foraging
TQ803922	1/3/02	brown long-eared bat found by member of public
TQ804918	13/8/05	serotine found in house
TQ805906	12/9/97	brown long-eared bat found in High Street premises
TQ805910	12//7/03	common pipistrelle recorded foraging
TQ809915	30/4/86	pipistrelle found by member of public
TQ812903	30/3/97	common pipistrelle recorded foraging
TQ817917	29/8/93	brown long-eared bat found by member of public
TQ817918	4/7/97	common pipistrelle roost in house