Bat Survey
of
299 Ferry Road
Hullbridge

On behalf of:

Hilliard Homes
Three Bays Farm
Canewdon Road
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Essex
SS4 3JN

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January 2008

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1) Summary

In February 2007, a residential property at 299 Ferry Road, Hullbridge, Essex, was the subject of a site visit to determine whether the building had been used by bats. At that time, the survey found that there was no evidence of the presence of bats associated with the property and that the vegetation at the site was unsuitable to provide potential roosting places for bats. As a result of a further planning application affecting the building, a follow-up survey was conducted on 16th January 2008 to ascertain whether bats had colonised the property in the intervening period. This second survey found that much of the roof volume had been taken up with dormer windows to the front and rear of the property, with the remaining void comprising a cupboard of triangular cross-section and a small, shallow-pitched void to the front of the property. This void had an abundance of cobwebs on the ridge beam and rafters, conditions that would have been a deterrent to colonisation by bats. No evidence of the presence of bats was found on the floor of the loft or along the internal eaves of the building. There was also no evidence of bats on the walls of the property and the absence of crevices in the soffits and gable of the building, and around the UPVC fascias of the dormers, meant that there were no potential roosting places available for bats.

The vegetation in the rear garden comprised single birch, willow, a fruit tree and ornamental shrubs. Two Scots Pines were present in the front garden. There were no crevices, loose bark or woodpecker holes associated with these trees and they offered no potential roosting places for bats.

Although no evidence of the presence of bats was found, it is probable that bats from nearby roosts will forage in the garden of this property and also in adjacent gardens. This behaviour would be expected to continue after the building work is completed and therefore it is considered that the planning proposal for this site will not have a detrimental effect on the local bat population.

Please note that this survey records the status of the property at the time of the survey. If several months were to elapse before the commencement of the building work, it would be prudent to conduct a further survey to determine if bats have colonised the building during the intervening period.

2) Introduction

Essex Mammal Surveys were requested to carry out a second survey of a residential property at 299 Ferry Road, Hullbridge to investigate for signs indicating the presence of bat colonies and their 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 Natural England (Licence No. 20063258), carried out the survey on 16th January 2008.

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. On 21st August 2007 an amendment to the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 came into force. The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) (Amendment) Regulations 2007 have a variety of consequences for the protection of European Protected Species and for Natural England's licensing processes.

European protected animal species and their breeding sites or resting places are protected under Regulation 39. It is an offence for anyone to deliberately capture, injure or kill any such animal or to deliberately take or destroy their eggs. It is an offence to damage or destroy a breeding or resting place of such an animal. It is also an offence to have in one's possession or control, any live or dead European protected species.

The threshold above which a person will commit the offence of deliberately disturbing a wild animal of a European protected species has been raised. Now, a person will commit an offence only if he deliberately disturbs such animals in a way as to be likely significantly to affect (a) the ability of any significant groups of animals of that species to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young, or (b) the local distribution of abundance of that species. However, please note that the existing offences under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended which cover obstruction of places used for shelter or protection (for example, a bat roost), disturbance and sale still apply to European protected species.

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 Natural England) 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.

Paragraph 98 of Circular 06/2005 accompanying PPS9 states that *'the presence of a protected species is a **material consideration** when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat.'* Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9) has recently replaced the Government's Planning Policy Guidance: Nature Conservation note, PPG 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). Since October 2006, licences have been granted by Natural England.

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 void of the property was 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 survey building is a detached residential property with a tile and felted roof. The survey found that much of the roof volume had been taken up with dormer windows to the front and rear of the property, with the remaining void comprising a cupboard of triangular cross-section and a small, shallow-pitched void to the front of the property. This void had an abundance of cobwebs on the ridge beam and rafters, conditions that would have been a deterrent to colonisation by bats. No evidence of the presence of bats was found on the floor of the loft or along the internal eaves of the building. There was also no evidence of bats on the walls of the property and the absence of crevices in the soffits and gable of the building, and around the UPVC fascias of the dormers, meant that there were no potential roosting places available for bats.

No evidence of the presence of bats was found at this property.

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 at 299 Ferry Road, it is expected that foraging bats from nearby roosts may visit the site to feed, particularly in the surrounding woodland and gardens where there are many mature trees. This behaviour would be expected to continue after the completion of the building work and it is therefore 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:

TQ803943	28/7/06	common pipistrelle recorded foraging
TQ806954	1/12/06	pipistrelle roost in house
TQ807953	16/1/86	pipistrelle found by member of public
TQ808951	9/8/85	serotine roost in house (no longer present)
TQ815966	11/7/84	pipistrelle roost in house
TQ817967	8/10/95	soprano pipistrelle recorded foraging
TQ820931	30/4/94	brown long-eared bat found by member of public
TQ820935	17/7/92	pipistrelle found by member of public
TQ828936	13/3/87	pipistrelle found by member of public