

09/0005/OUT

68 HIGH ROAD

Protected Species Survey Report

~~Land at 72 and~~ 68 High Road, Rayleigh, Essex SS6 7AD

By

Pearce Environment Ltd

Date

June 2007

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1. Introduction

This survey and report was commissioned by Martyn Pattie Architects and was undertaken by T Pearce on 28th June 2007.

This survey was commissioned in response to a revised proposal for planning consent to develop the site into residential accommodation including demolition of the existing properties know as 72 High Rd.

Our survey took the form of a record(s) search, an initial site walkover and close inspection of the site.

The objectives of this survey were to identify as far as possible any ecological constraints including protected species likely to be present on the site and to assess the potential for any possible impacts on those species when the proposal goes ahead.

2. Methodology

2.1

A general assessment was required of this site. Any species that are legally protected, or otherwise worthy of conservation, were to be identified as far as possible, along with the ecological value of the site. This was limited, especially in terms of flora, due to the time of year and the size of the plot.

It is not possible to record all species present in one visit at this time of year, but it is possible to attain a reasonable assessment of the ecological value of the site.

2.2

The area was studied for the following evidence of badger activity:

- ☐ Badger setts, main, annex, subsidiary, and outlier.
- ☐ Evidence of recent excavations, at the setts.
- ☐ Bedding, evidence of it being collected, or contained within the spoil heap. (Badgers collect dry vegetation for use as bedding material).
- ☐ Latrines, containing badger dung (badgers defecate in the bottom of small pits).
- ☐ Foraging scrapes or snuffle holes.
- ☐ Characteristic tracks.
- ☐ Badger hairs, especially around sett entrances, in spoil heaps, on fence wires, scratching posts and trees.
- ☐ Badgers paw prints or claw marks.

2.3

A walkover study in daylight, visual inspection and assessment of the present buildings and grounds for bats and evidence of use by bats. Our experienced surveyor was equipped with ladders, torches, inspection mirror, portable spot light, ultrasound detectors, night vision scopes and binoculars.

The area concerned was studied for the following evidence of bat activity:

- ☐ Staining, beneath or around a hole, caused by the natural oils in bat fur.
- ☐ Scratch marks Scratch around a hole caused by bat claws.
- ☐ Bat droppings beneath a hole, or resting area.
- ☐ Bat droppings and/or insect remains beneath a feeding area.
- ☐ Audible squeaking, from within the hole, especially on hot days or at dusk.
- ☐ Insects, especially flies, around a hole.
- ☐ A characteristic odour of bats and/or droppings.
- ☐ Dead bats - usually young from a nursery roost site.

2.4

The area was searched for signs of amphibians by undertaking a systematic hand search of any suitable refugia/hibernacula and netting of the ornamental garden pond in the garden of No. 68.

3. Assessment

3.1

Historical records from the biodiversity database were searched for any important species recorded at Rayleigh in the past. However they provide little insight into the ecology and conservation value of this particular site. Badgers, Song Thrush, Great Crested Newts and Bats are known to be in the area and are Essex Biological Action Plan Species.

3.2

Botanical

No.72 - The site consisted of areas of hard standing, gravel and 2 existing buildings. A mature conifer hedgerow bordered the site at the rear of the buildings, but was contained in the next door property.

No.68

This consists of an existing three bedroom detached property, outbuildings and a managed garden with some semi mature tree stands including English Oak (*quercus robur*), conifer and shrub species such as rhododendron, with no rare or protected species noted.

3.3

Mammals

3.3.1 Bats

As the properties known as 72 High Rd will be demolished as part of the planning application a bat survey was required of the buildings exterior and interiors.

Where access was possible and considered safe, we carefully examined all accessible horizontal and vertical surfaces for evidence of previous or current use by bats in the loft spaces.

There was no internal or external evidence of current or previous bat roosting activity apparent in the buildings looked at, at the time of the survey, or in the trees on site. Our surveyor paid particular attention to gable ends and other areas where the structural timber pieces met the brickwork, window sills, etc.

An ultrasonic bat detector was also used to check the internal spaces, as bats can sometimes be heard 'chattering' on warm days. The roof voids appeared in good condition, with the benefit of insulation.

No. 68 High Rd

It has previously been noted in an earlier survey (not conducted by ourselves) that a bat roost may exist in the house of 68 High Road. We did not inspect the building as our client is not under ownership of the building at this moment in time. The building will need to be surveyed and any required mitigation will be needed and a licence applied for once all the information on the bat species, roost type population etc is known.

It is possible that the garden of No.68, offers some potential bat foraging opportunity as do the neighbouring gardens.

3.3.2 Badgers

No badger setts or other signs of recent badger activity were recorded in the boundaries of rather Nos 72 or 68.

3.3.3

A reasonable amount of Fox activity was present in the garden of No.68, day nests or diurnal resting places, foraging signs paw prints and tracks were noted.

3.3.4

As no water courses are found on the site or adjacent to, otters and water voles, crayfish and newts will not be present.

3.4

Breeding birds

No breeding bird nests were evident in the garden during the survey. however several garden bird species were seen during the survey such as Wren, Robin, Blackbird, Great Tit, Blue Tit and Magpie. The habitat is not suitable to support barn owls.

3.5

Reptiles / Amphibians

No. 72

No water courses are found on the site and despite a hand search of any suitable refugia, no signs of reptiles or amphibians were discovered on site.

No.68

A small, shallow ornament garden pond, was discovered in the garden of the property, containing some submerged and emergent vegetation including common reed, duckweed covered the surface of the watercourse. The watercourse was netted for a 20min period using a EA Standard GB Nets 2mm amphibian net. A good population of common frog (*rana temporaria*) was discovered, but no evidence of common toad, smooth, palmate or great crested newt.

Please bear in mind that June is a time of year when many amphibians may already be in suitable terrestrial habitat.

The sites offer low or even no potential to support Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*).

3.6

Reptiles

The application site is not deemed ideally suitable to support any reptile populations, with the lack of south facing slopes. There was no evidence of any reptiles during the survey visit.

3.7

Invertebrates/Insects

Invertebrate species including Woodlice, Slug, Snail, Earthworm and Ant were noted in the garden.

4. Conclusions

4.1

We have much experience of this type of site and potential development. This survey has been completed to the best of our ability, at the time of year in the time scale provided, where access was possible and considered safe.

4.2

No.72

The site is use for commercial purpose and as such no vegetated areas exist on the site of any ecological value.

No.68

A well managed suburban garden, similar to those of neighbouring properties. It is not of any national ecological importance and has no statutory protection status or any other non-statutory conservation designation; it is not notified as a County Wildlife Site. It is of some significance as a garden, and is likely to continue to be of benefit for species such as garden birds and invertebrates.

4.3

No.72

We see no detriment to any protected species whilst the proposed work goes ahead. We feel that no amphibian/badger/bat mitigation is required for the scheme.

No.68

We can see that there could be some major impact on bat(s) roosting within the house. We will need to see a copy of the previous ecological report and our licensed bat worker will need to conduct the necessary bat emergence surveys, in order to draw up the necessary mitigation and licence application, which will be required for the planning process.

5. Recommendations

5.1 General

No.72

During development caution should be exercised in respect of all species offered statutory protection. In the unlikely event that any protected species are noted on site during works then, as required by law, we must be called in and Natural England consulted and necessary mitigation put in place.

5.2 Birds

No.68

The site contains modest residual vegetation, the removal of which during development has the potential to cause disturbance to nesting birds between March – August (the nesting season).

5.3 Bats

No. 72

No action/mitigation is required as no bat roosts exist on the application site.

No.68

If bats are deemed to be present in the building, approximately 3 further update summer bat emergence nocturnal surveys, using bat detection equipment (between May – Sept, when bats are active) must be carried out by our licensed bat worker in order to gain the necessary information required for a DEFRA/Natural England bat development licence, to possibly allow the works to commence.

From these further visits, we should be able to draw up a bat mitigation proposal and a licence application.

Under Regulation 44(2)(e) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994, a licence is required prior to disturbing any bat roost.

5.4 Great Crested Newts

No action is required as no newts or breeding ponds are evident on the sites.

5.5 Mammals

The provision of mammal exists in any trenches, should be provided by sloping one side of any trenches to allow safe exit by mammals that may enter on to the site. Safe animal passage should always be retained.

5.6

Please note: All birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and it is thus an offence, to:

Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird

Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built.

Intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird

Intentionally (or recklessly in England and Wales) disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

5.7

We recommend the provision of nesting boxes and possibly bat boxes at the site (which we are able to supply and fit). These boxes should not be a constraint or made to be a condition on the planning consent, but would be a welcome conservation enhancement to the site.

www.wildlifeshop.co.uk has a comprehensive range of quality roost and nest boxes.

5.8

A follow up, update visit, at an appropriate time of year maybe prudent prior to development commencing.

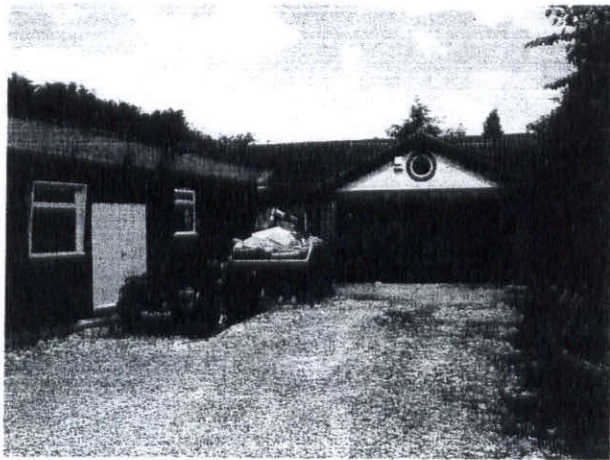
6. Quality Assurance

George E Pearce - Director

George enjoys the highest reputation as an expert in his field. He has studied badgers and their behavior for over 50 years and has worked closely with many animals on a daily basis. George Pearce became a professional consultant prior to the Protection of Badgers Act, 1992. He has been granted licenses by English Nature, The Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, Department of Environment Farming and Rural Affairs, The Welsh Office Agricultural Department and The Countryside Council for Wales. He is recognized as a badger and fox expert by Magistrates and Crown Courts and has appeared as an expert witness in numerous badger related court cases. He lectures on the lifestyle of the badger and fox to a wide range of audiences and speaks regularly at nationwide conferences. He has many years of hands on experience, gained when running an animal rehabilitation unit. The RSPCA and local vets have placed injured and convalescent animals and birds in his care and he has successfully returned to the wild, over 100 badgers and 60 foxes. He brings to his work a lifetime's interest in badgers and foxes and offers independent and unbiased advice to all clients.

Tristram E Pearce - Managing Director

Tristram's wealth of knowledge about badger and fox behavior has been built up over the past 18 years, working alongside his father and learning at first hand from the animals themselves as they recovered in the wildlife rehabilitation centre. Today as a company director he is actively involved in every aspect of protected species surveying, monitoring, conservation and mitigation. He has experience in surveying for badgers, bats, newts, reptiles, water voles and crayfish. He has significant practical experience of sensitive planning issues. He routinely deals with every aspect of mitigation and project management. Tristram is the holder of an English Nature Nationwide Badger Disturbance licence, which enables him to supervise work near badger setts. He has also been issued with numerous licenses from English Nature, the Department of Environment Farming and Rural Affairs and the Countryside Council for Wales. Tristram is trained in confined space working and possesses his Personal Track Safety and Individual Working Alone Certifications. He is also a member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.



No 72



No 68



Pond