

MR LUKE ENGLAND

BRYNHEULOG, WELSH ST DONATS

DAY-TIME INSPECTION SURVEY REPORT

04 December 2014



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Soltys Brewster Ecology were commissioned by Mr Luke England (the client/property owner) to undertake an ecological assessment with particular regard to the likely presence of roosting bats and nesting birds at Brynheulog, Welsh St Donats, (Grid Ref: ST 02927 76199). A site location plan is provided in Appendix I. The site comprises of a residential dwelling which has been recently vacated (September 2014) and a series of outbuildings which are proposed for demolition and redevelopment (see proposed layout plan, Appendix I). The ecological appraisal described in this report is intended to inform re-development works at the site, programmed to commence over winter 2014/15.
- 1.2 This report presents the findings of a day-time inspection survey of the existing site buildings and curtilage – comprising of a paddock to the east and existing residential properties to the north, south and west – to inform the proposed demolition and re-development works.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Daytime Inspection

- 2.1 To inform the likely ecological constraints for the demolition/redevelopment works, a walkover survey was undertaken by a suitably experienced and licensed ecologist¹ & assistant on 27 November 2014, combined with an external and internal inspection of the existing buildings where access was possible. In order to establish the presence of roosting bats within the buildings, the internal and external inspection aimed to identify:
- if bats are, or have been, present within the buildings and, if so, which species are present;
 - the type of roost (e.g. day roost, feeding perch, night roost, hibernaculum);
 - how bats use the buildings (e.g. location of roosting bats, exit and entrance points to the roost); and
 - the intensity of use (e.g. number of bats, time and duration of use).
- 2.2 External surveys at the site involved the use of binoculars, high-powered torch (1 million candle-power) and ladder to identify possible access/entry points into the buildings and aimed to identify any evidence of use by bats such as droppings, staining, prey remains etc. The internal survey searched for similar evidence of current or historical use by bats.

¹ Full Member of Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management & NRW bat licence holder – Ref: 50479:OTH:CSAB:2013

- 2.3 Internal access was possible to all the buildings within the red line boundary and into the majority of the roof space of the main residential building which was accessed via a loft hatch in the main hall in the 1st floor bathroom. The only constraint on access was imposed by an internal brick partition wall separating the loft space above one of the bedrooms (at the western end of the building). No physical access into this area was possible although it was possible to see part of the space from the eastern part of the loft (see Target Notes in Appendix II).
- 2.4 The surveyor searched for roost evidence (droppings, staining, scratch marks, etc.) as described above and an assessment of the buildings potential to support nesting birds was also undertaken. The scope of the bat inspection survey, including timing and survey effort was based on guidelines published by the Bat Conservation Trust (2012).

3.0 RESULTS

Day-time inspection

Overview

- 3.1 The results of the day-time inspection are summarised in the following sections, with further details provided in the target notes in Appendix II. Brynheulog and associated out buildings are located at the eastern fringe of Welsh St Donats with Heol Mynydd bordering the northern boundary of the site. Hard standing/bare ground, and overgrown lawn/shrub beds with a derelict chicken run are located in the immediate curtilage of the residential building with a line of immature Sycamore and Ash along the western boundary.
- 3.2 The external and internal inspection of the main residential building and associated outbuildings did not identify any evidence to suggest current or previous use by bats. The residential building is currently vacant although was in use as recently as September 2014 and is generally wind and weatherproof although in a poor state of repair. The roof and ridge tiles are generally in good condition although several small gaps were associated with degraded soffit and fascia boards with holes and gaps enabling potential access for bats or nesting birds. A small number of gaps were noted along the ridge associated with missing mortar on ridge tiles. Overall the building was considered of Low potential for roosting bats and the presence of a large (e.g. maternity colony) or regularly used roost was considered very unlikely although the possibility that individual or small numbers of bats could be present could not be completely ruled out based on the day-time inspection. .

Existing Residential Building

- 3.3 The residential building is a two storey, rendered, brick and stone built building with a pitched slate roof and timber fascias/soffits (see front cover). As described above and in the target notes, timber fascias and soffits as well as wooden framed windows to the southern elevation were generally in poor condition with a number of gaps noted (e.g. Plate 1). For example, the southern elevation supported two dormers with timber cladding and shallow gaps beneath these boards were visible from the ground (Plate 2). Checks from the ladder confirmed the gaps are shallow (1 – 2 inches) and do not lead into a void with cobwebs noted in places partially covering the gap. No bat droppings or staining were noted on the boards or on the timber-framed windows below. A section of the soffit is missing to the right hand side of each of these 2 dormers, and old bird nesting material was present in each location (Plate 1); but no evidence of bats was seen. .

Plate 1. Gaps in southern elevation soffit with bird nesting material found within space



Plate 2. Shallow gaps beneath timber cladding at southern elevation



Southern elevation

- 3.4 The slate roof, ridge tiles and chimney stack are generally in good condition with no missing or slipped slates. The mortar joints to the ridge tiles are generally sound, apart from two small missing sections in the area between the 2 western dormers. Lead flashing to the chimney is also sound (See front cover). The window frames at the first floor level was checked (via ladder) and gaps were noted in rotten frames and in the soffits. A small number of bird droppings and old nesting material associated with soffits was identified, but no evidence to indicate use by bats was noted (Plate 1).

Western Gable

- 3.5 The western gable end comprised of painted brick with old ivy growth to the north western corner; the ivy has been cut at the base so only dead stems remain. The fascia and soffit were missing at the apex of the gable, with the exposed brickwork providing possible access to the cavity wall although this feature was too high to access directly. No bat droppings were visible of the painted brick below the apex although the remains of an old bird best were present lodged between the fascia and the wall to the south. Missing brickwork/render were also noted at 2-3 locations where the structural timbers protrude from the gable end (e.g. Plate 3). , these were checked via a ladder and no bat droppings or other evidence of use was noted.

Plate 3. Missing brickwork/render where the structural timbers protrude from the gable end



North Elevation

- 3.6 The north western corner of the building at ground level was overgrown with Bramble and Ivy providing some potential for scrub nesting birds. The roof and ridge tiles were generally in good condition, with no obvious loose or missing slates apart from a small gap at north east corner (Plate 4). Raised tiles & flashing were also noted to the small dormer (west side), with a gap in the fascia on the north west corner. No evidence of birds or bats was noted from the ground-based check or from inside the property as viewed through the open first floor window.

Eastern Gable

- 3.7 The eastern gable end consisted of white render, with fascias/soffits generally sound; with the exception of a gap at the north east corner (Plate 5). No external evidence of birds or bats were noted at this location or on the walls below.

Plate 4. Gap in roof tile on northern elevation



Plate 5. Gap in the fascia on the north east corner of building



Interior Rooms

- 3.8 The interior rooms were all light, open and generally sound with painted or papered walls and no obvious means of entry (i.e. ceilings all sound) or features of potential value to crevice dwelling or free hanging bats noted (e.g. Plate 6). Open windows were noted on the first floor which could provide possible access for birds or bats, but no evidence of this was recorded inside the building. The airing cupboard to the side of the bathroom on the first floor was dark and dry but there was no obvious means of access for birds or bats when the door is shut (as it is presently). This is also applicable to the coat cupboard on the ground floor at the foot of the stairs. The fireplaces on first floor and ground floor were checked, but no evidence to indicate use by birds or bats was identified.

Plate 6. First floor bathroom to show loft hatch and condition of ceiling/walls



Loft Space

- 3.9 The Single loft space runs the entire length of the building and was accessed from a hatch in the first floor bathroom. A half height brick partition wall separated the western part of the roof space and no access into this area was possible (see Section 2.3). The roof space to the west was only viewed through the partition, which was of similar character/dimensions to the main roof-space; with heavy cobwebbing noted to the ridge beam and visible timbers. The accessible roof space was generally dark with little or no light ingress noted at the eaves although draughts were evident at roof level. The roof space is relatively small (approximately 3-4m wide) and cluttered, with a ridge height of approximately 1m above the ceiling with some of the available space used to store suitcases, boxes etc. (Plate 7).

- 3.10 Bitumen underfelt was present to the underside of the slates with a second layer of felt affixed to the roof timbers – this was ripped/hanging in a number of locations (e.g. Plate 7). No evidence of use by bats was recorded within the roof space and the small/cluttered nature is likely to limit its potential value – for example it would be less suitable for free-hanging species such as Brown Long-eared *Plecotus auritus*. Two dead mice and two bird skeletons (possibly Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*) were noted close to the loft hatch and rodent droppings were scattered throughout the roof space. An accumulation of bird droppings was also identified on the southern side towards the centre of the roof space, but no nesting material or other evidence of recent use was noted.

Plate 7. Loft space – View from loft hatch towards eastern gable end



Garage and Outbuildings

- 3.11 The garage and outbuildings comprised of timber or block wall construction (Target Notes 2 – 5, Appendix II & Plate 8) with corrugated sheet roofing (asbestos cement type or similar) and all were considered of Negligible potential for use as day roosts by bats although could be used on irregular basis as a night roost or feeding perch. All of the outbuildings have window or door openings which could easily be accessed by birds or bats but no evidence of bats was noted in any location. Evidence of use by birds including scattered droppings on stable doors and several dis-used mud nests were identified (e.g. Target notes 3, Appendix II). The outbuilding in the south of the site was constructed from corrugated metal sheeting over a timber frame and was open to the north side (Target Note 6). This structure was considered of Negligible potential to

roosting bats although 2 old mud nests were identified on the eastern side of the building lodged against the timber frame (Plate 9).

Plate 8. Outbuildings (Target Notes 2-4)



Plate 9. Two disused mud and hay bird nests in Outbuilding 6



4.0 LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND PLANS

- 4.1 The following international and national legislation & planning policy pertaining to bats and nesting birds are considered of some relevance to the site surveyed and the proposed demolition/redevelopment works.

Legislation Pertaining to the Protection of Bats

- 4.2 Under Annex II of the *Council Directive 92/43/EEC 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora* (EC Habitats Directive) some bat species are listed as of Community Interest, the conservation of which requires designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); Under Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive all bat species are listed as of Community Interest, in need of strict protection. In England and Wales, the EC Habitats Directive has been transposed into law in 1994 and, following recent amendments is set out in the *Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulation 2010* to give bats, their breeding sites and resting places a high level of strict protection making it an offence (subject to certain specific exceptions) to deliberately capture or kill/injure a bat, to damage or destroy a place used for shelter or protection or to deliberately disturb a bat in such a place.
- 4.3 Bats are also afforded protection within England and Wales under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
- 4.4 Recent Case Law² has placed an onus on local planning authorities to satisfy ‘three tests’ under the Habitats Directive when determining applications that could affect European Protected Species. Essentially, these three tests are: i) that there is no satisfactory alternative; ii) that the proposed development is in the overriding public interest (including those of a social or economic nature) and iii) the proposed development would not adversely affect the Favourable Conservation Status of the species locally.

Legislation Pertaining to Birds

- 4.5 Under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) all wild birds are protected against killing or injury and their nests against damage or destruction whilst they are being built or contain eggs/dependent young.

² Wooley vs. East Cheshire (2009) and Morge vs. Hampshire County Council (2010)

Planning Policy Wales (2014)

- 4.6 This document set out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) with Chapter 5 dealing with Conserving and Improving Natural Heritage and Coast. The advice contained within PPW is supplemented for some subjects by Technical Advice Notes (TAN), with TAN 5 addressing Nature Conservation and Planning (September 2009).

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 5 – Nature Conservation and Planning

- 4.7 Under Section 2.4 within the TAN 5, *‘when deciding planning applications that may affect nature conservation local planning authorities should’*:
- Protect wildlife and natural features in the wider environment, with appropriate weight attached to priority habitats and species in Biodiversity Action Plans (PPW 5.2);
 - Ensure that all material considerations are taken into account and decisions are informed by adequate information about the potential effects of development on nature conservation (PPW paragraphs 5.5.1 and 5.5.2);
 - Ensure that the range and population of protected species is sustained (PPW 5.2.3, 5.5.11 and 5.5.12);
 - Adopt a step-wise approach to avoid harm to nature conservation, minimise unavoidable harm by mitigation measures, offset residual harm by compensation measures and look for new opportunities to enhance nature conservation;

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The internal and external inspection surveys undertaken at Brynheulog did not identify any evidence to suggest current or previous use by roosting bats. A number of potential access points were identified associated with raised roof tiles and missing or raised sections of soffits and fascias on the residential building. However, for the latter features, only evidence of use by nesting birds was identified and the internal check of the roof space found no evidence of use by bats. The building is generally weather-proof, albeit in a poor state of repair, and overall was considered of Low potential for roosting bats.

- 5.2 Based on the findings of the day-time survey, the presence of a large or regularly used bat roost was considered unlikely, although occasional use by individual or small numbers of bats could not be completely ruled out. For example, bats could potentially gain access to the soffit boxes via the missing sections at the or possibly to the space between the underside of roof tiles and the bitumen underfelt (via raised tiles). However, the likelihood of bats being present was considered to be low based on the lack of evidence from the current survey. Based on current BCT guidelines for buildings with Low potential, a further dusk and dawn survey of the main residential building would be recommended to provide a robust indication of likely absence. Such a survey could be undertaken when bats are active between April/May – September.
- 5.3 The proposed works at the site would involve demolition of all the buildings within the red line boundary although the start of construction of the new dwelling – excluding the Garage/hobby room - (see Appendix I) would not require the prior demolition of the existing house. The outbuildings (Target Notes 2 – 6) were all considered of Negligible value to roosting bats and no further surveys of these structures would be recommended. On a precautionary basis, the demolition of these structures should adopt ‘reasonable avoidance measures’, as described within the Bat Mitigation Guidelines (Mitchell- Jones, 2004). The following measures are considered appropriate to the demolition of the outbuildings:
- Timing constraints employed to ensure that any removal of the existing outbuilding roofs are completed between December 2014 and March 2015 when the likelihood of bats (or nesting birds) being present is further reduced;
 - Removal of roof sections using hand tools as far as practicable;
 - Prior to commencement of re-roofing works, operatives briefed on the low possibility that bats (or birds) could be present and, in the unlikely event that a bat were discovered, works would cease immediately and the local authority ecologist or Natural Resources Wales (NRW) contacted.
- 5.4 The timing constraint on demolition of the outbuildings described for bats would also coincide with the period outside the bird nesting season, which typically runs from March – August inclusive, and would effectively reduce the risk of any possible conflict with the protective legislation. The timing constraints would also apply to the removal of any scrub, hedgerow or tree removal within the red line boundary. A precautionary approach would be required if the Ivy covered Ash tree on the western boundary (see ‘Garden’ Target Note, Appendix II) was to be felled i.e. section felled with felled limbs lowered to the ground and left overnight prior to removal from site.
- 5.5 No demolition work or other alterations could be undertaken at the main house until such time as any emergence/re-entry surveys described in Section 5.2 had been completed. Whilst it is recognised that the local planning authority is required to apply the Habitats Regulations Tests to the proposed works, the

likelihood of an large or important roost being present within the main house, the loss of which could not be effectively mitigated, is considered very unlikely – i.e. the risk of an effect on Favourable Conservation Status of bats locally is low. If required, mitigation for loss of a small non-breeding roost of species such as Pipistrelles could be delivered as part of the proposed works – e.g. bat boxes placed on retained trees or incorporated into the new garage/hobby room and appropriate timings/techniques employed for demolition work. On this basis, demolition of the outbuildings could be progressed (as described in 5.3) with the requirement for surveys of the main house prior to any demolition works controlled by a suitably worded planning condition. Further discussion with the Case Officer and local authority ecologist would be recommended to confirm this approach.

- 5.6 Dependent on the findings of the emergence/activity surveys from spring 2015, mitigation and licensing measures may be required. On the assumption that no evidence of roosting bats was identified from these surveys, consideration should be given to the use of bird or bat boxes as part of the proposed redevelopment to provide local enhancements. Whilst it is accepted that allowing bats or birds access into the roof space of the new house may not be appropriate, the use of wall-mounted boxes on the Garage/Hobby room or of tree boxes at the boundary of the site could be considered. . The range of boxes suitable for birds or bats can be viewed via e.g. the NHBS website at:

http://www.nhbs.com/nest_boxes_and_habitats_eqcat_420.html

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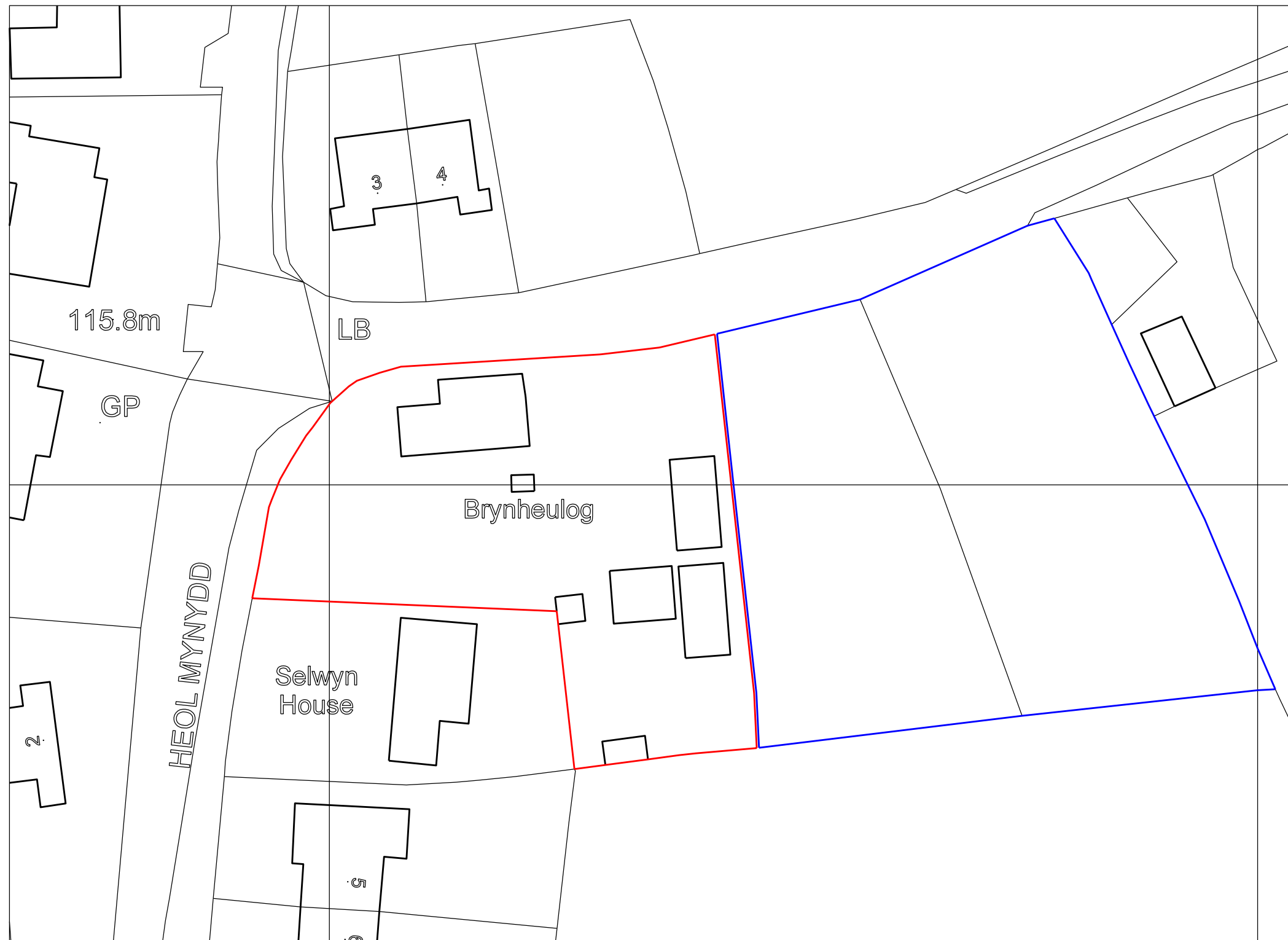
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APPENDIX I EXISTING & PROPOSED LAYOUT PLAN



N O T E S

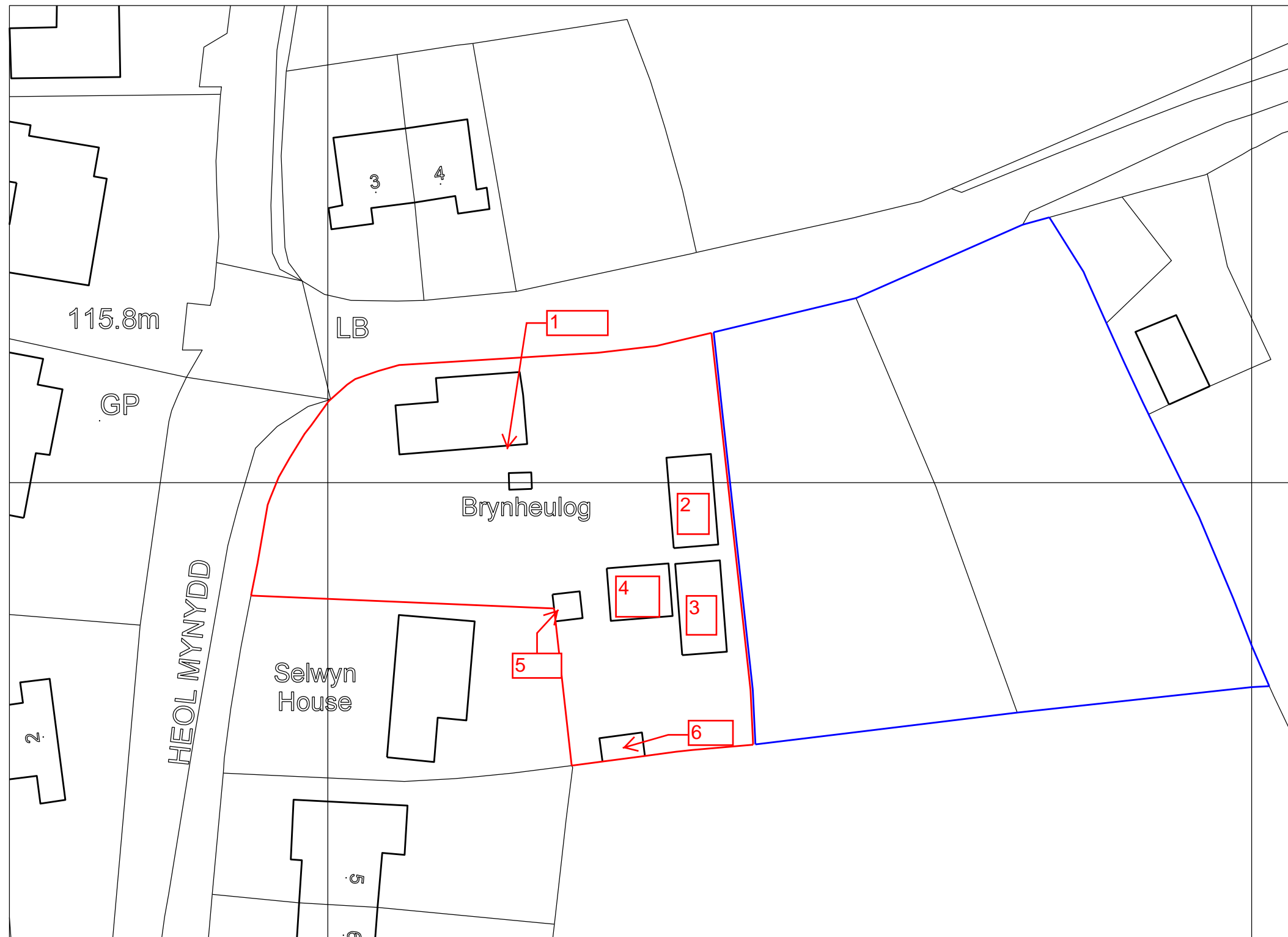
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APPENDIX II TARGET NOTES & ANNOTATED PLAN FOR DAY-TIME INSPECTION

Target Note	Description/comment
<i>Main House</i>	
Note 1	<p>2 no. Dormers with timber cladding to south elevation – shallow gaps beneath these boards visible from the ground. Check from ladder confirmed gaps are shallow (1 – 2 inches and do not lead into a void) and cobwebbed in places. No bat droppings or staining noted on boards or on timber-framed windows below.</p> <p>Section of the soffit is missing to the right hand side of each of these 2 Dormers and old bird nesting material was present in each location – no evidence of bats seen.</p> <p>Timber cladding on ground floor to south side of porch also checked and similar lack of evidence/presence of only shallow gaps noted.</p> <p>Two other dormers to southern elevation are ‘boxed in’ at the apex – no obvious gaps noted here.</p>
Loft Space	<p>Single loft space running the length of the building accessed from a hatch in first floor bathroom. Half height brick partition wall separates the western part of the roof space and no access into this area possible although could be observed through a gap in the partition wall.</p> <p>No obvious light ingress into the roof space at eaves level although some draughts evident. Roof space is fairly small and cluttered with a ridge height of approx. 1m above the ceiling. Loft space used to store suitcases, boxes etc.</p> <p>Bitumen underfelt to roof slates is hanging in several location and evident that a double layer of felt has been used in places – i.e. to underside of slate and affixed to roof timbers. Small/cluttered nature of roof space would suggests it is unsuitable for free-hanging species (such as Brown Long-eared).</p> <p>2no. dead mice and bird skeleton (possibly Starling) noted close to loft hatch and rodent droppings scattered throughout. Collection of bird droppings on southern side towards centre of roof space.</p> <p>No evidence of bats found at any location.</p> <p>Roof space to west only viewed through partition – similar character/dimensions and heavy cobwebbing noted to ridge beam and visible timbers.</p>
Interior Rooms	<p>Interior rooms are generally light and open and generally sound with painted or papered walls and no obvious means of entry (i.e. ceiling all sound) or features of potential value to crevice dwelling or free hanging bats noted. Open windows provide possible access for birds or bats but no evidence of this noted.</p> <p>Airing cupboard to side of bathroom on first floor is dark/dry but no means of access for birds or bats when door is shut (as it is presently). This also applicable to the coat cupboard on the ground floor at the foot of the stairs.</p> <p>Fireplaces on first floor and ground floor checked – no evidence to indicate use by birds or bats.</p>
Exterior	<p>Southern elevation – Slate roof, ridge tiles and chimney stack generally in good condition with no missing or slipped slates. Mortar joints to ridge tiles is generally sound but with two small missing</p>

	<p>sections in the area between the 2 western dormers. Lead flashing to Chimney is also sound.</p> <p>Window frames at first floor level checked (via ladder) and gaps noted in rotten frames and in soffits. Small number of bird droppings and old nesting material associated with soffits but no evidence to indicate use by bats noted.</p> <p>Western Gable – painted brick with old ivy growth to north western corner; ivy has been cut at base so only dead stems remain. Fascia and soffit missing at the apex of the gable with brickwork exposed providing possible access to cavity wall. Too high for direct access but no droppings etc noted on walls via binoculars/torch check. Old bird nest lodged in soffit to south side of apex.</p> <p>Missing brickwork/render also noted where structural timbers protrude from gable end – these checked via ladder and no droppings etc. noted.</p> <p>North Elevation – Overgrown with dense Bramble at north western corner (ground level) and dense Ivy on walls.</p> <p>Roof and ridge tiles generally in good condition with no obvious loose or missing slates apart from small gap at north east corner. Raised tiles & flashing also noted to small dormer (west side), with gap in fascia on north west corner. No evidence of birds or bats noted from ground-based check with binoculars/torch. Area around the dormer window also checked from inside the house (window opens) and no evidence found.</p> <p>Eastern Gable – White render with fascias/soffit sound with exception of gap at south east corner – no external evidence of birds bats at this location or on walls below. Flat roofed PVC porch/conservatory at ground floor level.</p> <p>House overall of Low bat potential.</p>
Garage	<p>Attached to NE corner of the house. Timber construction with sloping corrugated sheet roof (asbestos cement type or similar). Heavy cobwebbing to walls and timber frame internally and bird splashing/droppings on roof timbers & stored animal feed containers etc. No evidence of bats noted – limited access when doors are shut. Negligible potential as a day roost although could be used on irregular basis as night roost or feeding perch but no evidence of this.</p>
Garden	<p>To south and west of house with chicken run in central area. Lawn and shrub areas overgrown/neglected. Several multi-stemmed Sycamore and Ash to western boundary although these generally too young to support features of roosting potential. Ivy cover on Ash may have some limited potential for bats or nesting birds. Trees of Category 2/3 for bats.</p>
Outbuildings	
Note 2	<p>Brick built outbuilding with rendered walls and corrugated sheet (asbestos cement or similar) roof covered with tarpaulin. Timber cladding to north gable is sound as is southern gable. 2 no. stable doors and window to west elevation. Bird droppings on lower half of doors & window openings. No nests or evidence of birds/bats inside the buildings – floors recently swept.</p> <p>Heavy cobwebbing to walls and roof timbers/frame. No evidence of bats and overall of Negligible potential.</p>

Note 3	<p>Timber construct outbuilding with roof as for Note 2. Timber walls are generally sound with no gaps noted. Bird droppings on stable door & window openings to west elevation. Interior as for note 2 although bird droppings to interior window ledges and old mud nest with grass/hay in southern gable end.</p> <p>Overall Negligible bat potential.</p>
Note 4 & 5	<p>Rendered block built outbuildings as for notes 2 & 3. Note 5 with corrugated plastic sheet roof.</p> <p>Both of Negligible bat potential and no bird nests noted in either.</p> <p>Dense Ivy to south-east corner of Note 5 with nesting bird potential.</p>
Note 6	<p>Outbuilding of corrugated metal sheet construction over timber frame used to store hay. Open to north side. Negligible bat potential. Evidence of use by birds with 2 no old mud nests with grass/hay on timber beam to east side.</p>



N O T E S

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