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By E-mail Only

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Dear Helen,

COACH HOUSE, RECTORY ROAD LANE (PLANNING REF: 2015/00163/FUL)
SUMMARY RESULTS OF DAY-TIME BUILDING INSPECTION

Further to the correspondence received from the local planning authority dated 31 March, we have completed the day-time assessment of the Coach House to check for any evidence of use by bats. A summary of the survey method and findings/recommendations is set out below.

Survey Method

In order to establish the potential of the building to support roosting bats, an internal and external inspection of the building was undertaken on 03rd July 2015 by a suitably experienced & licensed surveyor[1]. This survey aimed to identify: -

- if bats are, or have been, present within the buildings to be demolished and, if so, which species are present;
- the type of roost (e.g. maternity roost, day roost used by males or non-breeding females, feeding perch, night roost, mating roost, transitional roost, hibernaculum);
- how bats use the buildings (e.g. location of roosting bats, flight paths and flight behaviour, exit and entrance points to the roost)

External surveys at the site involved the use of binoculars and ladder to identify possible access/entry points into the Coach House 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. The surveyor searched for roost evidence (droppings, staining, scratch marks, noise, etc.) as described above and a note was also made of any evidence of use by nesting birds. The scope of the bat inspection survey, including timing, survey effort etc., was based on guidelines published by the Bat Conservation Trust (2012)[2].

Summary of Findings

The results of the day-time inspection are summarised below, with further details provided in the enclosed target notes/photographs. The external and internal inspection of the Coach House and attached greenhouse did not identify any evidence to suggest current or previous use by bats. The Coach House is in a poor state of repair and numerous gaps and openings were identified that could offer potential access for

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

[2] Bat Conservation Trust (BCT). 2012. Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines. Second Edition. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

bats or nesting birds. The interior of the building is very light and open with no enclosed roof space and no evidence to indicate use by bats was noted on stored materials, walls, windows or doors (see target notes). Some evidence of previous use by nesting birds was identified with a disused cup nest on the timbers in the north western corner of the building and nesting material also visible within a cavity above the first floor window on the northern side – no evidence to suggest recent or current use by birds was identified at either location.

Overall the building was considered of Negligible/Low potential for roosting bats and the presence of a notable (e.g. maternity colony) or regularly used roost was considered very unlikely. The features described within the target notes could potentially provide some limited opportunities for use by individual or small number of bats, such as a night roost or feeding perch, but no evidence of this was noted. Although the possibility of this level of use could not be completely ruled out based on the day-time inspection, the likelihood of a roost being present was considered to be Negligible/Low.

As part of the proposed demolition and redevelopment work at the site, the existing trees (fruit tree and Bay) adjacent to the northern boundary would be felled. The fruit tree supports a dense cover of ivy leaves although stem cover was relatively light and this tree was considered of limited potential (Category 2 tree as described by Bat Conservation Trust 2012 Guidelines) for roosting bats. No features suitable for use by bats were associated with the Bay tree.

Conclusion & Recommendations

The internal and external inspection surveys undertaken at the Coach House did not identify any evidence to suggest current or previous use by roosting bats. Overall the building was considered of Negligible/low potential with the latter category associated with potential for use by individual or small numbers of bats as a day roost or feeding perch. No evidence of this level of use was noted during the current survey and, given that there was no constraint to access for the interior of the building and that the shallow cavities around the exterior (e.g. Notes 4, 6 & 8) were checked via torch/ladder, the likely absence of bats at the Coach House could reasonably be concluded.

Further activity surveys would be unlikely to alter the assessment of the building as of Negligible/low potential although it is recognised that the absence of bats is difficult to prove (Bat Mitigation Guidelines, 2004). On this basis, a precautionary approach to demolition works adopting 'reasonable avoidance measures' would be recommended. The following measures are considered appropriate:

- Prior to commencement of demolition 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;
- Removal of all existing timber fascias and soffits to be undertaken using hand tools (e.g. crow bars). Windows and doors also to be removed using hand tools prior to demolition using plant or machinery.

A similar precautionary approach would also be recommended for felling or pruning of the fruit tree in the north western corner of the site. This tree should be felled in autumn (September/October 2015) so as to further minimise the risk of any bats being present and to avoid the bird nesting season.

The findings of the day-time inspection survey combined with the precautionary approach to building demolition/tree felling are considered to provide the local

authority with sufficient information to permit their review of the application against the relevant protective legislation and planning policy.

We trust that the findings of the survey and the recommendations are clearly described barns, although should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Dr Matthew Watts
Director

Enc: Target Notes, Photos & annotated plan from day-time survey