

BAT RISK ASSESSMENT


Old Shepherd's Cottage, Ingram
Extension



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PROTECTED SPECIES RISK ASSESSMENT

Old Shepherd's Cottage, Ingram.

Summary

The owner of Old Shepherd's Cottage, Ingram is seeking planning permission to replace an existing wooden extension with a stone built larger extension. Northumberland National Park have requested a bat risk assessment of the property and the proposed works.

The assessment was undertaken in July 2014. The house itself is judged to have a low risk of roosting bats being present, with the extension itself having negligible risk. The risk of the proposed works to bats is negligible.

Bats are known to be present in the local area and in order to remove any residual risk certain precautionary working methods are recommended.

1. Introduction

A Preliminary Roost Assessment/daylight survey for bats and birds found no evidence of bats using the building.

This report has been commissioned by the applicant, Mr .Glen-Davison.

2. Relevant Legislation & Conservation Status.

Bats are the principal species of concern in relation to this development. In Britain all bat species and their roosts are legally protected, principally under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010), with additional protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended, including under Schedule 12 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000, which created a new offence of reckless disturbance.

The combined effect of these is that a person is guilty of an offence if he;

- Deliberately captures, injures or kills a bat
- Intentionally or recklessly disturbs a bat in its roost or deliberately disturbs a group of bats.
In particular where this may;
 - i. impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or rear or nurture their young;
 - ii. affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species
- Damages or destroys a bat roosting place (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time)
- Intentionally or recklessly obstructs access to a bat roost.

In the UK, bat populations have declined considerably over the last century. Bats are still under threat from building and development work that affects roosts, loss of habitat, the severing of commuting routes by roads and threats in the home including cat attacks, flypaper and some chemical treatments of building materials. Other potential threats can include wind turbines and lighting if they are sited on key bat habitat or near roosts¹. Whilst recent years have seen bat populations stabilise or increase, largely due to increased legal protection and conservation efforts, bats will take some time and more concerted effort to recover to their previous levels.

In Northumberland there are 10 recorded species (17 for the UK) of bat.

All species of breeding birds, their nests, eggs, and dependent young are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

3. Methodology.

3.1 Desktop Survey.

The area was surveyed using ARC GIS, with habitat features of value to bats such as watercourses, woodland and hedgerows noted.

Bat data records have been requested from Northumberland Bat Group. In the absence of these records a habitat suitability assessment and anecdotal evidence have been used to conclude that bats are present in the local area.

3.2 Site Survey/Risk Assessment.

A site visit took place on 2nd July 2014, between 15.00 and 17.00 in good light. During the survey the temperature was around 15°C, and sunny.

Ann Deary Francis assessed the building for signs of bats and breeding birds. The buildings were thoroughly checked inside and out for any signs of bats; including live or dead bats, droppings, feeding remains, clawing or scuff/grease/urine marks at roost entrances, and potential roost features such as cavities or gaps in roofing tiles, soffits, loose mortar etc. The survey followed the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines (2012) on Preliminary Roost Assessment.

A general assessment of the property was carried out but the focus was on the rear of the building where the works will be carried out.

All features on the site were checked for signs of nesting or resident birds (such as vacant/old nests).

¹ www.bats.org.uk

A high powered torch (220 lumens AP Pro Series Cree LED spotlight), a smaller high powered maglite torch and Swarovski 10x42WB SLC binoculars were used during the survey. An Explorer Premium endoscope was used to check cracks and gaps in the roof and walls. Ladders were used to access the roof structures. Full access to the loft space was available.

3.3 Surveyors.

Ann Deary Francis is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Assessment (CIEEM) with fifteen years' experience in ecology and environmental management, who has carried out habitat and bat surveys on a variety of sites and has accessed advanced training in bat and bird surveys. She holds a Natural England Class 2 Survey Licence for bats (ref 2014-526-CLS-CLS). She is a trainee BTO bird ringer and barn owl licence trainee.

4. Works Proposed.

Figure 1. Existing Elevation (not to scale, from Architect's Plans)

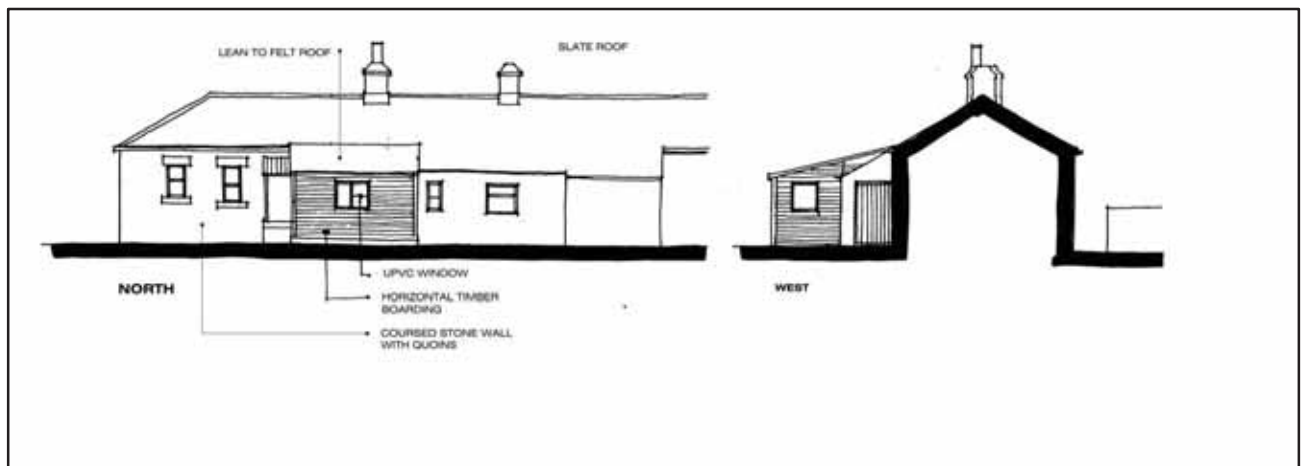
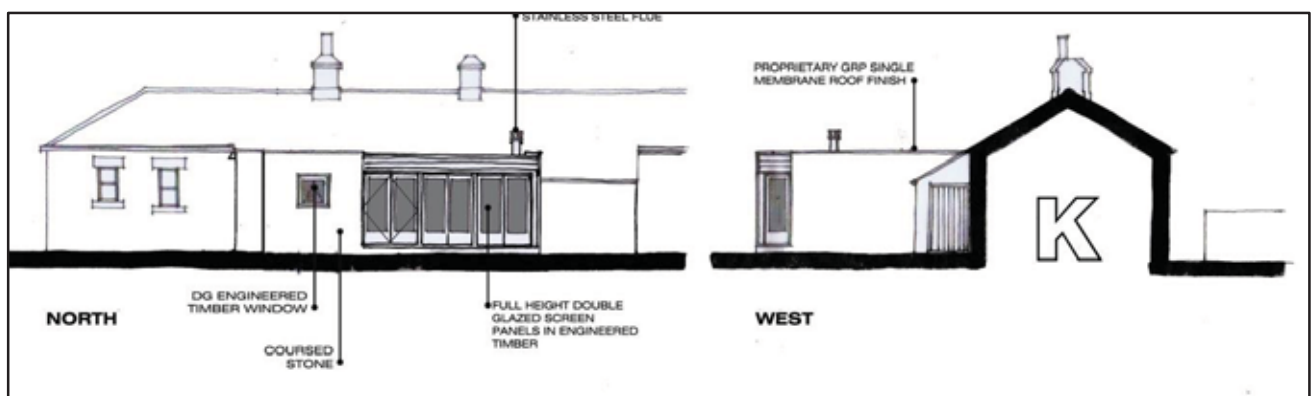


Figure 2. Proposed Elevation (not to scale, from Architect's Plans)



A small wooden extension (currently housing the kitchen) will be demolished and replaced by a larger stone, glazed and timber extension.

Approximately 6 rows of slates from the bottom of the existing roof will be removed to allow room for the extension.

5. Site Assessment.

The cottage is in the village of Ingram in the Breamish Valley within Northumberland National Park. The River Breamish is <200m from the property, and pockets of woodland lie within 1km of the village. The village and surrounding areas have tree cover and older buildings and offer excellent opportunities for foraging and roosting bats. The River Breamish and tributaries offer excellent foraging habitat. The surrounding area is largely pasture with pockets of woodland and some patchy trees along field margins and watercourses. Anecdotal reports suggest a significant bat roost is present in the village church.

Figure 3. Village and surrounding area (via Google Earth)



5.1 External Assessment.



Figure 4. View from rear showing existing extension.

The extension is a wooden cladded structure with a sloping bitumen roof. The cladding is tightly sealed as is the bitumen sheeting. Slates from the house roof are generally well sealed at the join to the bitumen roof with few gaps, all of which are very shallow. The access for bats to this area is limited due to the drop height required to exit/enter a roost in flight. No signs of bats were found.

The wall tops to the rear are >2m high and shallow. No signs of bats were found and this is an unlikely bat roost due to the height required for easy access/entry to roosts in flight.



Figure 5. Detail of the join to the main house.



Figure 6. Detail of join to the main house, above door.



Figure 7. Rear wall (to be extended)



Figure 8. Roof to the rear.

At the rear roof above the site of the extension gaps in the ridge tiles are present, although no signs of bats were seen. Providing that certain precautionary working methods are followed should a roost be present here it will not be impacted by any of the proposed works. The front of the house has solar panels which limits roosting opportunities. This area will not be impacted by the works.

Figure 9. Front elevation.



5.2 Internal Assessment

The loft space was fully accessible. No signs of bats were found. The loft was wooden cladded under the tiles and well insulated.



Figure 10. Interior of loft, main house.

5.3 Grounds.

The cottage has gardens to the front and rear and a small stone and slate outbuilding. Pasture lies beyond the rear garden.

6. Assessment of Risk and Determination of Survey Effort.

The cottage itself is assessed as being low risk for roosting bats, due to the lack of suitable roosting opportunities and no signs of bats being found. The sole risk is at the ridge tiles to the roof. The cladding to the underside of the roof may create a suitable roost space which cannot be seen on inspection, therefore a roost may be present and this would need to be determined by emergence/entry survey. This is in accordance with the BCT Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines.

However, to the rear elevation and in relation to these specific works the risk to bats is negligible. So long as works are carried out outside of the active season for bats (May to August inclusive) it is unlikely that the work to the extension would impact on any bats which may be present elsewhere in the building.

The building is unlikely to be used as a hibernation roost by bats as it is well heated and insulated.

Further survey is not recommended for the demolition and replacement of the extension.

Recommendations are made to avoid any residual risk of impacting on bats.

No evidence of breeding birds was found during the assessment.

7. Recommendations.

Please note that these recommendations are intended to prevent an offence being committed. They apply to the building owner and their appointed agents/contractors.

1. No work will be carried out between May and August inclusive, unless under consultation with the project ecologist and under supervision if necessary.
2. For any works to the structure, all demolition and construction staff will be made aware of the potential presence of bats, their legal protection and the contact details for the project ecologist.
3. No netting to be used on scaffolding or built structures.
4. Should any protected species (bats, breeding birds) be found whilst construction works are in progress, work must stop immediately and advice sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.
5. Any timber treatments will be approved for use where bats may be present.
6. Roofs and high risk structures (doorframes, window frames, beneath roof panels, in mortise joints, cavity walls, areas of loose stones, between lintels) should be carefully dismantled by hand with checks for bats as the work proceeds.
7. Lighting on the new extension will be designed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust/Institute of Lighting Engineers' Guidance.
8. Any new external lighting will be directional, low intensity and controlled by motion sensor. ²
9. Works will avoid the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive) unless a suitably qualified ecologist has confirmed that no nesting birds are present.

² Bats and Lighting,
http://www.bats.org.uk/data/files/bats_and_lighting_in_the_uk_final_version_version_3_may_09.pdf

References

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Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Assessment Technical Guidance www.cieem.net