

The Village Hall

Sampford Courtney

Devon

**Bat and Breeding
Bird Survey**

JG Ecological Surveys Ltd

**Client: Mr Carpenter
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1. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

1.1 General

JG Ecological Surveys Ltd was commissioned by Mr Carpenter on behalf of the Parish Council to carry out a bat and breeding bird survey of the Village Hall, Chapple Lane, Sampford Courtney, Devon, EX20 2ST.

The survey was commissioned due to a proposal to re-roof the building.

The village hall is located on the western edge of the village and is in a rural position with hedge bound grassland/arable fields to all aspects.

The site was centred on OS grid reference SS 6304 0125.



Photograph 1: Village Hall

1.2 Survey Aims

Fieldwork was undertaken in order to identify whether bats used the building for roosting and to check for the presence of nesting birds ahead of any disturbance of the existing roof coverings.

1.3 Summary of Results

Bats

Potential access points were noted to all aspects with ones of note being found at the eaves, where dormers cut into the main roof pitches and through ventilation slots high in the gable walls (one of these is shown in Photograph 1).

Barn owl

There were no field signs of Barn owl and the building had negligible potential to support the species and therefore no further reference to the species will be made within this report.

Breeding Birds

Opportunities for crevice nesting birds were present at the eaves and where dormers keyed into the main roof pitches.

1.4 Implications for the Proposed Works*Bats*

Bats are fully protected under both the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In combination these pieces of legislation make it an offence to:

1. Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat
2. Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or deliberately disturb bats
3. Damage or destroy a bat roosting place (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time)
4. Possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat (dead or alive) or any part of a bat
5. Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost

Nesting birds

The potential presence of nesting birds either within, or on, the building and associated boundaries would impose timing constraints on any works that might disturb them due to their legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The nesting season is typically mid March to mid to end August but is prone to local variation depending on such things as weather conditions and food supply. Works that might impact on nesting birds would need to be timed for commencement after the last fledgling has stopped returning to the nest, and prior to the nesting season of the following year (the initiation of nest building is considered the point at which the sites are protected from disturbance).

2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

2.1 Site Survey

Visual Inspection

A visual inspection survey of the building was undertaken by Jason Gillingham (a Natural England licensed bat surveyor), on the 21st February 2022. The building was searched visually, using binoculars, endoscope and a high-powered torch, for field evidence of bats, breeding birds and Barn owl, with particular attention being paid to sheltered areas such as window ledges and loft floors where bat droppings might lie undisturbed from the weather. The roof spaces (where accessible) and floors were inspected in detail for bat droppings, urine staining or actual bats. The building was assigned a category for its potential to support a bat roost on the basis of Table 1 of Appendix 1.

The presence of current, or deserted bird nest sites were noted during survey.

2.2 Survey Limitations

The roof spaces were high above the hall floor (approximately 5m), a tower had been set up to provide access however other areas of the roof space were deemed potentially unsafe to access.

3. RESULTS

3.1 The Village Hall

Description

Wall construction	Stone with partial rendering
Roof construction	The roof had a complex layout with a number of areas where the roof pitch changed and cut into the main roof line (refer to Figure 1). The slate roof covering was predominantly unlined although some areas were boarded beneath



Photograph 2: Eaves level potential access point



Photograph 3: Example of the exploitable areas where roof pitches key into each other



Photograph 4: Cross shaped unmeshed ventilation in the gable walls viewed from inside the roof space (also shown on Photograph 1 from the outside)

Visual Inspection Findings

Bats

There were various potential access points for bats including those shown on Photographs 2 to 4. The eaves level openings extended into the wall top area and a section where the roof covering was boarded beneath offering potential crevice roosting areas. Photograph 3 shows an example of potential bat access points via the flashing around the areas where roof lines keyed into each other. Photograph 4 shows an unmeshed ventilation feature that leads into the main roof space. There were two of the latter (one in each gable). A low number of scattered small bat droppings were noted in the main roof space however it was not possible to tell if these were from prospecting behaviour or roosting.

Breeding birds

The potential access points shown on Photographs 2 to 4 were also exploitable by crevice nesting birds. No signs of previous nesting were noted however the eaves access points in particular were of high potential for crevice nesting species.

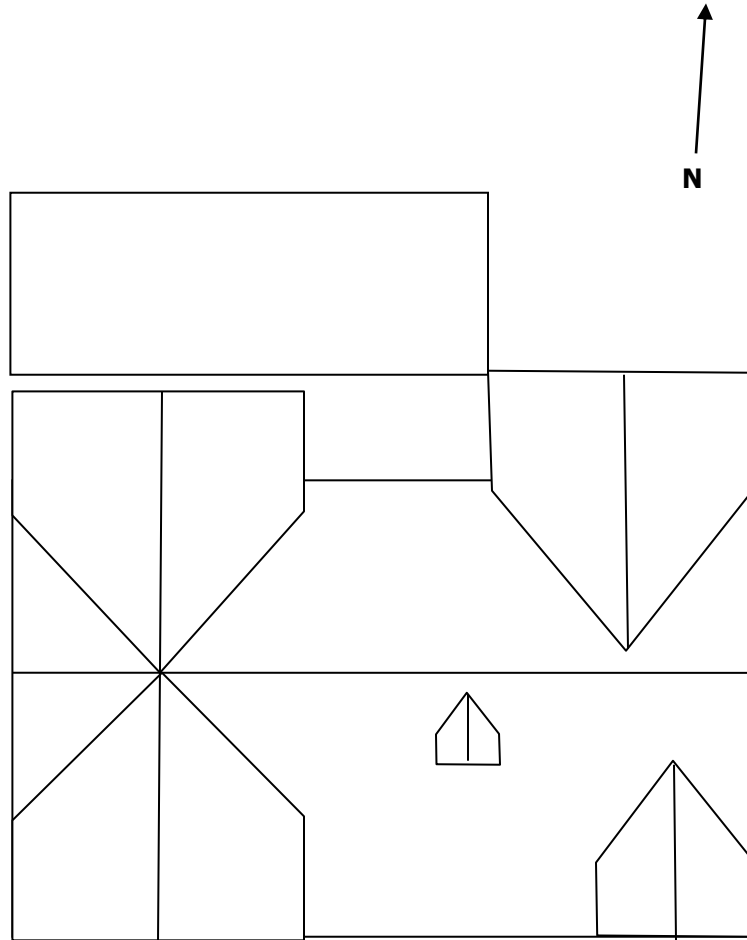


Figure 1: Sketch plan of Village Hall Roof Line

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The Village Hall

Bats

It could be concluded that there were potential access points for bats and that a low number of scattered droppings were noted in the main roof space. It could also be concluded that the re-roofing works could be carried out in a way that avoided impacts on bats, and that the roof spaces could be returned to a condition that could be exploited by bats after the works were completed.

Breeding birds

It could be concluded that potential nesting sites were present along the eaves of the village hall.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The Village Hall

Bats

Further Survey

Due to the presence of potential bat access points it is recommended that emergence surveys are carried out during May and June 2022 to verify if bats are roosting at the site. A minimum of two evening emergence surveys and a dawn re-entry survey is recommended.

Legislative recommendations

If bats are confirmed as roosting on site then there would be legal requirements to adhere to. To avoid committing an offence under existing wildlife legislation a series of measures would need to be undertaken and a licence obtained from Natural England. Depending on the level of use either a full Protected Species development licence will be required to carry out the works, or if only low numbers of a common species are present then the works could proceed under a Low Impact Class Licence (LICL). The works would need to be carried out under a method statement which would cover working practises and materials to ensure that bats were maintained at a favourable conservation status at the site once works had finished. The licence would have to cover the following areas:

Timing of works

The works should be timed for when there is the least likelihood of disturbance to occur and if for example a breeding roost was discovered the period from May to August would have to be avoided. For lower conservation significance roosts that could be covered under a LICL no timing constraints would be necessary. If the works can be timed for when no bats are present and the roost site can be returned to pre works condition then it is possible that no licence will be required for the works as an avoidance of impacts approach could be adopted.

Roost retention

The method statement would provide detail around how the existing roost sites would be retained post works. It would also require that no breathable membrane was used in bat roosting areas as these have been shown to be capable of entangling bats in piled fibres.

Lighting

Indirect disturbance impacts such as increased or newly positioned lighting should be avoided. No lighting of any roosting areas would be permitted under a licence.

If no bats are found to be roosting after the emergence survey programme then there would be no legislative recommendations with respect to bats.

Planning policy recommendations

Due to the large number of potential bat and bird access points into the building no additional planning policy recommendations are made.

Nesting Birds***Legislative recommendations***

The presence of actively nesting birds would pose a legal constraint to the works as all nesting birds are protected during their breeding cycle. Therefore the works would be ideally timed to commence outside of the bird breeding season, which is generally considered to be between March to August inclusive, although it is important to note that depending upon the weather conditions and/or food supply nesting can extend outside this period. Nesting is determined as being from when birds first initiate nest building up until the point when fledglings stop returning to the nest. If any active nest/breeding sites are identified at the wall top locations highlighted, these nests, and the immediately surrounding area, should remain undisturbed until all the young have fledged naturally. If no active nests are present no timing constraints would apply.

Planning recommendations

Due to the large number of potential bat and bird access points into the building no additional planning policy recommendations are made.

6. REFERENCES

Collings, J. (ed) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Mitchell-Jones A. (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Classification criteria for assessing the potential value of buildings

It should be noted that the grading system below only reports on the situation at the time of survey; should bat activity levels change after the initial survey, or should the buildings be modified (for example if roof tiles are removed or fascia boards develop cracks), the category may need revision.

Please note: Intermediate categories (for example Low – Moderate value) may apply.

Category (Potential value)	Description
No/negligible value	Buildings with no or very few features capable of supporting roosting bats. Often buildings are of 'sound' well-sealed structure, or have a single skin and no roof void. They tend to have high interior light-levels, and little or no insulation. Buildings without any roofs may also fall into this category.
Low value	Buildings of largely unsuitable construction, but with few features of potential value to bats (e.g. gaps above windows, apparently shallow crevices). No supporting evidence (e.g. droppings / staining) found. Buildings may be surrounded by poor or sub-optimal bat foraging habitat, as is often the case in urban-centre locations.
Moderate value	Buildings usually of brick or stone construction with a number of features of obvious potential value to roosting bats e.g. loose roof / ridge tiles, gaps in brickwork, gaps under fascia boards, and/or warm sealed roof-spaces with under-felt.
High value	Buildings with a large number of features of obvious potential value to bats (as above). Bats may be suspected to roost within the building (at least at certain times of year), but no supporting evidence found.
Confirmed roost	Bats discovered roosting within the building, or recorded emerging from / entering the building at dusk and / or dawn. Building found to contain conclusive evidence of occupation by bats, such as bat droppings. A confirmed record (as supplied by an established source such as the local bat group) would also apply to this category.

Table 1. Appendix 1