

# Bat Scoping Survey to

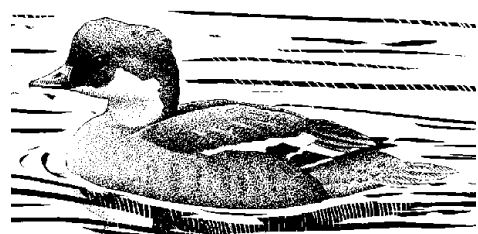
Willow House  
High Lane  
Ingbirchworth  
S36 7GP

26<sup>th</sup> June 2023



## John Gardner

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# 1. Summary

- 1.1 A bat scoping and activity survey has been carried out to land opposite Willow House, Ingbirchworth to determine if there are features that have potential to be used by roosting bats. The survey is required as part of the planning application process and was undertaken during the optimal time for bat occupancy and therefore aimed to establish the presence or absence of bats in the building. The application seeks to erect a residential dwelling on the site.
- 1.2 The site is a large garden belonging to Willow House but is located on the opposite side of the lane leading to the dwelling. The bulk of the site is lawned with small shrubs and ornamental plantings in flower beds around the edges with some small trees to the periphery including a large sycamore tree in the extreme NE corner, a cherry in the SW corner and a shaped cherry tree in the centre of the lawn. There is also a small stone toolshed on the north edge of the site which appears to be recently constructed and has drystone walls around a blockwork inner and a stone tiled roof. The shed is not large and is surrounded by dwellings offering much greater roosting potential but there are a small number of potential bat roost features (PRFs) present in the walls and roof and therefore, the shed has been assessed as having low bat roost potential.
- 1.3 As the building is only head height at the eaves, all PRFs within the walls were searched using a high-powered lamp looking for droppings or bats within the crevices but none were found. The roof has stone tiles but these are quite flat though there are natural gaps present. Although experience suggests that there are no bats in this building, an assessment of low roost potential requires a single emergence survey and this was undertaken on July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2023. No bats emerged from the shed but common pipistrelles were active in the area and emerged from one of the surrounding buildings. There were no nesting birds in the shed and a search of the shrubs did not reveal any active nests.
- 1.4 The building is not considered essential to species survival and the garden has no value to roosting bats and bats were only seen commuting through the garden. Therefore, there are no statutory constraints to the development of this site from the presence of bats. No further survey work is required.

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1 A bat scoping and activity survey was carried to land adjacent to Willow House, High Lane, Ingbirchworth S36 7GP (NGR SE223056) to determine whether bats have or are using the building as a roost site. The site was also checked for the presence of nesting birds.
- 2.2 The current proposal seeks planning permission for a residential dwelling to be erected within the site footprint which will include demolition of the existing small building.
- 2.3 The survey took place at a time considered to be the optimal period for bat occupancy aimed to establish the following:
- The presence or absence of bats using the buildings by undertaking a scoping survey.
  - Identify any potential roosting features (PRFs).
  - Determine if activity surveys are required.
  - Provide an impact assessment of the development on bats.
  - Define mitigation proposals where required.
  - Assess the requirement for a protected species licence.
  - Assess the building for use by nesting birds.

## **3. Methodology**

- 3.1 The site was surveyed in accordance with BCT best practice guidelines and surveyor experience by John Gardner, a surveyor with 43yrs field experience in searching for bats and is registered to use the Class Survey Licence WML CL20 (Level 4). The licence number is 2015-15656-CLS-CLS.
- 3.2 The interior and exterior of the building was inspected during daylight using torches, binoculars and an endoscope. All normal signs of bats were looked for including bats, dead baby bats, bat droppings, prey remains, scratching and staining of entry and exit holes.
- 3.3 The building was assessed for its degree of potential to support roosting bats including assessing the building design, construction, materials, and condition. This combined with an assessment of the location of the site and the surrounding habitat in terms of bat suitability allows an assessment to be made as to the potential of the building to support bats. Factors such as the proximity of good foraging areas (woodland, water bodies) and features that link the site to the wider surrounds such as linear features (hedgerows etc) were also considered.
- 3.4 This report sets out the findings of a daytime scoping survey and single activity survey carried out to the above site on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and an activity survey carried out on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023. The report highlights the ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the proposed works and appraises the potential impacts. Appropriate actions to ensure the protection of bats are identified and mitigation measures detailed where appropriate.

## **4. Survey constraints**

- 4.1 There were no constraints to the survey.



## 5. Site Description

5.1 The site consists of a large garden in a rural setting just off High Lane, Ingbirchworth and is surrounded by many other period buildings all of which offer greater roosting potential. The habitat around the site is average quality in terms of foraging but the site is connected to the wider area by a series of linear features.



Figure 1. Site location plan



Figure 2 Aerial view of the site, surrounds and specific buildings surveyed.



## 6. Desk Study

There are no records relating directly to the site and searches with WYE undertaken 6 months ago returned very few records for this area, most of which are historical. The the zone of impact does not extend beyond the site footprint and will have no impact on any other roosts.

## 7. Activity surveys

7.1 A single activity survey was undertaken on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023 during ideal conditions using both heterodyne and RTE detectors.

## 8. Survey results

### Scoping survey

The site comprises a large garden with a lawned central section and ornamental planting to borders along the edges of the site. There is a stone garden shed located on the north edge of the site that has only been constructed recently and is a low, single storey building. The roof is covered with large stone tiles over a breathable membrane, and it exhibits the usual natural gaps associated with this style of roof. There are no obvious signs of bats and given it's low height combined with the fact that it is surrounded by much larger, period buildings all offering greater roosting potential, experience suggests that it is unlikely that bats would use this roof.



Photo1 showing the roof exterior.

Internally, the roof is open to the ridges and is easily inspected from floor level. There are no signs of bats such as scattered droppings or prey remains. The internal apex is clean and shown no staining or other features associated with roosting bats. The ridge is covered by the breathable membrane and seems unlikely to be used by ridge dwelling species. The gable walls are as yet unfinished, and the membrane is visible and has not been trimmed or fascia boards attached. The verges are sound as would be expected on a new construction such as this and the ridge mortar is present and has no gaps that would allow access.

The side and rear walls have an outer covering of drystone walling which is attached to the blockwork with mortar and inspection shows that very few of the gaps in the walling are more than a few millimetres deep and unable to provide roosting cavities. Odd ones were slightly deeper but all were carefully inspected from ground level and showed no evidence of use by bats.



Photo 2 showing internal and external gable

The garden is mostly lawned edged with ornamental plantings comprising low shrubs such as berberis, forsythia, elder and laurel interspersed with verberna, foxgloves, euphorbia etc. None of the vegetation within the grounds offer any potential bat roosting features but may provide foraging for bats passing through the area as they emerge from nearby buildings. A check was made for nesting birds, but no active nests were noted. Nesting birds should be considered before ground clearance takes place with clearance works be undertaken outside the bird nesting season (Feb-July inclusive).

The site overall is considered to be of negligible interest to bats with the exception of the outbuilding which is assessed as being of 'low' bat roost potential.

#### **Activity survey**

As the stone shed was assessed as having 'low' bat roost potential, a single emergence survey was carried out on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023. A single surveyor was enough to cover the small building. The conditions were good with inly a gentle breeze, clear skies and temperature of 13.5°C. The survey commenced 30minutes prior to sunset until 90minutes after sunset.

No bats were recorded exiting the building but common pipistrelle were recorded on the wing just 20 minutes after sunset and emerged from the surrounding buildings. Common pipistrelle were observed in small numbers throughout the duration of the survey but were always recorded passing over the site as they headed to other foraging areas.

## **9. Interpretation and analysis**

The site in general is of little value to bats and they appear to simply pass through the site as they commute to other foraging areas, though some will feed in and around the garden before moving on. The stone shed was not considered to be used by bats but the presence of minor PRFs meant that an activity survey was required and carried out. This confirmed that bats are not using the building and are probably unlikely to do so due to the limited number and diversity of roosting features. The proposed new dwelling will occupy mostly the existing lawned area and all vegetation, particularly the trees, will remain post development.

## **10. Impact assessment**

The site has little significance to bats having a very limited number of roosting features and is simply used by commuting bats and probably for the occasional bit of foraging. Most of the vegetation is confined to the edges of the site and this will remain post development. The shed is not considered to be of any interest to bats and therefore, the development of the sites is unlikely to have any impact on the local bat population. There will be no loss of roosting sites and the development will not result in loss or fragmentation of habitat. Including permanent roosting features and bird nesting features will improve the site's biodiversity.

## 11. Mitigation and Compensation

The site has been assessed as being of 'low' interest to bats and, consequently, there is no requirement for a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML). Including a permanent bat roosting feature would compensate for any loss of minor PRFs and including a sparrow terrace is likely to be beneficial.

### Timings

- There are no timing constraints from the presence of bats.

### Compensation

- Inclusion of a Schwegler bat wall system 3FE should be incorporated into the structure on the west or south elevation.
- A Schwegler sparrow terrace 1SP should be considered and built into the north wall of the new dwelling or any associated outbuildings which may be erected.

## 12. Conclusion

A bat scoping and emergence survey established that the site overall has very little value to the local bat population but the stone garden shed offered a small number of PRFs and was assessed as being of 'low' interest to bats. A subsequent activity survey established that bats are not using the shed but bats are roosting locally. Erecting a dwelling on the site is unlikely to impact the local bat population and could, if permanent roosting features are included, increase the site's appeal to bats. The peripheral vegetation, including the trees, will remain and so will not result in loss of habitat.. There are no statutory constraints to the development of this building from the presence of bats and no further survey work is required.