

Clarke Webb Ecology Limited

ECOLOGICAL SURVEYORS & CONSULTANTS



GTO House

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Proposed replacement of storage shed with new barn

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Ecological Appraisal

Survey dates: 5th July 2012

4th November 2014

26th September 2016

26th November 2019

28th November 2023

Report date: 1st December 2023

1 Background and site description

- 1.1 This survey relates to the proposed demolition of a large storage shed at GTO House, Bath Road, Twyford and its replacement with a new barn at the same location but with a slightly extended footprint.
- 1.2 A satellite image of the site location can be found at Figure 1, site plan at Figure 2 and photographs of the site at Figure 3.
- 1.3 The building to be demolished (B1, Figure 2) is a large, single-storey storage shed. The lower c 1 m of three of the four external walls are brick or block-work. The remainder of the walls and the roof are of single-skin corrugated tin supported by a metal-frame. The interior is a single large void other than a small entrance lobby protruding at the southwest corner (with a mono-pitched plywood roof) and a small internal toilet block in the southeast corner. The building is in a state of disrepair and is currently used for the *ad hoc* storage of cars/car parts.
- 1.4 The building is surrounded by concrete yard to the west and north. The yard extends around the east elevation though in the southeast corner is replaced by soft ground supporting a cluster of small Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Elm (*Ulmus* sp) trees. To the east, beyond the cluster of trees is a small, dilapidated, flat-roofed external toilet block engulfed in scrub. To the south the building is separated from GTO house (large 2-3 storey brick office building), a timber 'summerhouse' and associated car parking and formal gardens by a small 'alley-way' occupied mostly by paving.
- 1.5 The site lies at the northeast edge of the village of Hare Hatch. Land to the south is largely suburban in character while that to the north is largely under arable cultivation.

2 Survey method

- 2.1 A walkover survey of the site and accessible immediately adjacent land was carried out during fair weather by day on the 5th July 2012 and repeated on the 4th November 2014, 26th September 2016, 26th November 2019 and 28th November 2023.
- 2.2 The intent of the above survey was to identify:
- i. the presence of any habitats of conservation importance or other features of ecological interest likely to be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed works;
 - ii. the presence or possible presence of protected species likely to be affected;
 - iii. any need for further ecological survey.
- 2.3 Survey covered:
- i. the building scheduled for demolition (B1) and the proposed footprint of the new barn (see Figure 2);
 - ii. immediately surrounding accessible land where thought appropriate;
 - iii. any other accessible adjacent land or features thought to be of potential relevance.

Data search

- 2.4 The MAGIC website was checked for the presence of adjacent statutory or non-statutory wildlife sites.
- 2.5 Where appropriate the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) was checked for local (within at least 5 km) records of protected species.
- 2.6 Reference was made to the following reports that relate to the site and/or adjacent land:
- i. *Clarke Webb Ecology Ltd (2016) GTO House, Floral Mile, Bath Road, Twyford. Ecological Appraisal. Rev 4. 27th September 2016*
 - ii. *Clarke Webb Ecology Ltd (2019) GTO House, Floral Mile, Bath Road, Twyford. Ecological Appraisal. Rev 5. 26th November 2019*

Habitats

- 2.7 Habitat survey followed the guidelines given in the Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey (JNCC 1993). Target notes were used to identify specific areas on a plan, cross-referenced where appropriate in the text. Detailed species lists were not compiled.

Protected species

Bats - Daytime survey and assessment

- 2.8 Building B1 (see Figure 2) was thoroughly searched, inside and out, for any sign of use by bats including:
- the presence of free-hanging bats or bats within crevices;
 - bat droppings, urine stains or feeding remains on horizontal and vertical surfaces (eg floors, walls, foliage) within and around it;

- the presence of potential access routes for bats into likely roosting sites and indications (such as scattered droppings or urine staining around or within entrances) of use of such potential access points by bats;
 - any other sign of use by bats.
- 2.9 All trees/tall shrubs present within, or immediately overlooking the site were checked for the presence (or likely presence) of locations that appeared potentially suitable for use by bats as roosts (including large cavities apparently suitable for use as major roosts by good numbers of bats and/or significant numbers of smaller crevices that appeared potentially suitable for use as minor roosts by individual or small numbers of bats).
- 2.10 Where appropriate, survey was aided by the use of binoculars, a powerful hand torch, an endoscope, a mechanics mirror, a penlight torch and a 5 m ladder.
- 2.11 With reference to the Bat Conservation Trusts 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition' (the Bat Survey Guidelines') the building and trees/shrubs were otherwise assessed as to their potential to house roosts that may not have been apparent during the survey.

Badger

- 2.12 The site and immediately adjacent accessible land were searched for evidence of use by badger including the present of setts, dung, tracks, foraging and any other sign.

Barn owl

- 2.13 A search was made for any sign of use of building B1 by Barn owls including the presence of Barn owls themselves, their pellets, feathers or any other sign.

Nesting birds

- 2.14 A check was made for sign of birds having nested recently within or upon building B1. Habitats otherwise present were assessed as to their potential for use as nest sites by birds though a thorough search for old birds nests was not carried out.

Other

- 2.15 Any other sign of use by protected species and/or the presence of habitats with a reasonable potential to support protected species was noted.

3 Survey results

Habitats

- 3.1 This survey relates to the proposed demolition of a single large storage shed and its replacement with a new barn the footprint of which will include that of the existing shed plus approximately 100 m² of adjacent land to the east. This adjacent land is currently partly hard yard and partly soft landscaping occupied by a group of 5, small, self-seeded Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Elm (*Ulmus* sp) trees (see site plan at Figure 2 and photographs at Figure 3).
- 3.2 Adjacent land is given over predominantly to hard yard to the north and west, a dilapidated flat-roofed toilet block engulfed in scrub to the east and neighbouring buildings and associated paved/landscaped gardens to the south.
- 3.3 According to the Magic website, the site does not fall within, contain or adjoin any statutory or non-statutory wildlife sites. The closest statutory sites appear to be Harpsden Woods SSSI some 4+ km to the northwest and Lodge Wood & Sandford Mill SSSI some 4.3 km to the southwest. While we note that the Magic website may not list all non-statutory sites we also note that the site and surrounding land (buildings, hard yards and landscaped grounds) are highly unlikely to constitute or fall within any such non-statutory site.

Protected species

Bats

- 3.4 No evidence was found during daytime survey/assessment for any use of building B1 or affected/overlooking trees/shrubs by bats.
- 3.5 Notwithstanding the above, and with reference to the Bat Survey Guidelines, the following table summarises the potential suitability of the buildings, trees/shrubs, habitats and other relevant features for use by bats:

Feature	Use	Details	Potential suitability
Building B1	Roosting	Fully accessible for survey Flying access throughout No inaccessible (for survey) sheltered internal voids Brick/block-work sound Upper walls and curved roof fitted with single-skin corrugated tin	Negligible
Trees	Roosting	Works may require removal of up to 5 small Sycamore/Elm trees at the southeast corner of B1. Two other small trees/tall shrubs lie adjacent to the south elevation but can most likely be retained. All of the above trees/shrubs are sound and relatively small/young.	Negligible
Habitats/linear features	Foraging/commuting	No suitable habitats/features affected	Negligible

- 3.6 We note that other survey has confirmed the presence of a Common pipistrelle bat day/small maternity roost and a Brown long-eared bat day roost in the roof of the adjacent/overlooking GTO House but that such survey did not confirm any use by bats of the north elevation of GTO House (ie the elevation overlooking the site) to access such roosts (see Clarke Webb Ecology Ltd 2016, 2019). The overlooking elevation of the adjacent toilet block to the east does not offer any potential for use by bats.

Badger

- 3.7 No evidence was found for use of the site or immediately adjacent land by Badgers.

Barn owl

- 3.8 No evidence was found for use of building B1 by Barn owls.

Nesting birds

- 3.9 No evidence was found for birds having nested recently within or upon building B1. There is a small risk of common birds nesting in denser vegetation (trees, shrubbery, scrub, Ivy) upon or adjacent to the site.

Other

- 3.10 No other evidence was found for use or likely material use (in a planning or legal context) of the site or immediately adjacent land by protected species. In this regard we note that:
- the vast bulk of the site is given over to buildings or hardstanding;
 - a small ornamental (fish) pond within the adjacent landscaped gardens to the south does not appear suitable for use by great crested newts and that there is otherwise no standing water on the site or apparent in the immediately vicinity of it.

4 Interpretation and recommendations

Habitats

- 4.1 The site does not contain, fall within or lie adjacent to any statutory or non-statutory wildlife site.
- 4.2 There are no Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats or other habitats of particular ecological interest or conservation concern present within or adjoining the site.

Bats

- 4.3 No evidence was found for use of the site as a roost by bats. All buildings/trees/shrubs present were deemed to be of negligible potential suitability for use as roosts. With reference to the Bat Survey Guidelines, no further bat roost survey is therefore warranted.
- 4.4 The site is of negligible potential suitability for material use by foraging/commuting bats. With reference to the Bat Survey Guidelines, no further bat activity survey is therefore warranted.
- 4.5 There are known bat roosts within the roof of the adjacent GTO House. However, no evidence has been found (in other survey) for bats accessing such roosts via the elevation that overlooks the site. Notwithstanding the above, the new build will be no closer to GTO house than the existing shed, the new roof line will be significantly lower in elevation than the existing and there do not appear to be any openings (liable to lead to light spill) proposed in the south elevation of the new build.

Nesting birds

- 4.6 It is an offence to damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is being built or in use.
- 4.7 Given the above, we recommend that:
 - i. **any significant removal of vegetation should be carried out between October and February inclusive (so as to avoid the nominal bird nesting season) or otherwise only following a thorough check to confirm that no active birds nests are present at the time. Should birds commence nesting within or upon buildings at any time then all works liable to impact upon them should be delayed until such nests are no longer occupied.**

Other

- 4.8 No evidence was found for use, or likely material use, of the site or immediately adjacent land by any other protected species.
- 4.9 Other than the above, we see no need for any further ecological survey in relation to the proposed works.

Disclaimer. All reasonable effort was taken to ensure an accurate assessment of the situation at the time of the survey. However, the absence of recorded sign should not be taken as an absolute guarantee that the site was not being used by a particular species. There is also no guarantee that any particular species will not use the site at any time in the future. Survey results may be weather or seasonally dependent.

Figure 1. Site location.



Based on satellite imagery from Google

Figure 2. Site plan.



Figure 2. Photographs (November 2023).



P1. Building B1 as viewed from across the yard to the northwest.



P2. The south elevation of Building B2 as viewed from its southwest corner.



P3. Building B1 as viewed from the northeast.



P4. The north elevation of Building B1 as viewed from its northeast corner.



P5. The small, protruding entrance at the southwest corner of Building B1.



P6. The internal toilet block in Building B1.



P7 and P8. The interior of Building B1.



P9. The cluster of small Sycamore/Elm trees at the southwest corner of Building B1 (visible on the right) with GTO House visible beyond.



P10. The dilapidated outside toilet block to the east of Building B1.