



**CONSERVATION**  
constructions

Wollaston School Science Block  
Bat Survey Report

For Wollaston School

14<sup>th</sup> December 2012

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## Summary

At the request of Matchbox Architects, Conservation Constructions undertook a daytime bat survey of the external cladding on the Science Block at Wollaston High School. The survey was undertaken to inform a planning application that will include refurbishment of the building.

Wollaston High School is east of Irchester Road on the eastern side of Wollaston Village. The building is adjacent to the west boundary of the school and is connected to other buildings on the north-west and south-east elevations. The front elevation of the building faces a tarmac covered playground and the rear elevation is adjacent to the site boundary and the rear gardens of nearby dwellings. There is external lighting on the building.

A daytime survey found no evidence of bats or birds gaining access to the cavities behind the timber cladding. There were no survey constraints, all the areas of damage were accessible and could be thoroughly surveyed.

The over-sized holes cut for the installation of services to the building and damage to the tongue and groove cladding does, however, offer opportunities for bats and birds to enter and it is strongly recommended that preventative action is taken as soon as possible to temporarily repair the damage prior to refurbishment. Should bats or birds gain access behind the cladding it could result in significant delays and additional costs if a bat licence was required.

## 1. Introduction

Conservation Constructions Ltd was requested to undertake a bat survey of the Science Block at Wollaston High School. The building is intended for refurbishment and it is necessary to determine if any of the damaged external cladding on the building elevations is used by bats, or birds, prior to undertaking the work.

Bats are a European protected species and any work which might disturb these animals or damage/destroy a roost, whether bats are present or not, necessitates a licence issued by Natural England prior to work commencing.

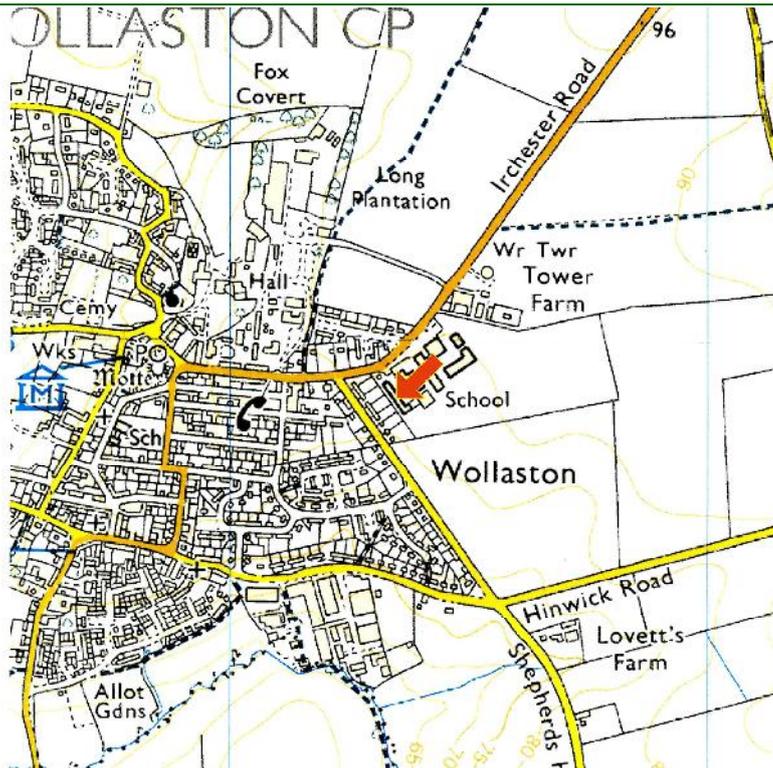
Nesting birds are similarly protected and can delay work until the young have fledged.

The survey comprised:

- a daytime, detailed survey of the exterior of the building for bats/birds
- advice on legal requirements in relation to the protected species or habitats
- recommendations in relation to the proposed refurbishment, including any mitigation for protected species if required

## 2. Site location

Wollaston High School is located on the east side of the village adjacent to residential properties and farmland. The location is shown in Figure 1 and the grid reference is SP913628.



**Figure 1 Site location shown by arrow** (Ordnance Survey @ Crown Copyright. All rights reserved licence number 100048215)

### 3. Survey methodology

A site survey was undertaken on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012, by Maurice Webber, ecologist and holder of Natural England (NE) species licence for bats (20122244) and full member of the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM).

The survey methodology took into consideration the NE guidance *Standing advice for protected species* and the relevant species survey guidelines endorsed by IEEM. The daytime survey covered:

- An external building survey looking for evidence of bats and their roosts including:
  - faeces, urine staining, feeding remains, dead animals
  - fur oil staining or scratch marks on timbers that may indicate a roost location
- The presence of birds was determined by old nesting material and/or liming

All of the building cladding was accessible with 5.4 m extendible ladders used as necessary. Other equipment used included 1 million candle power clulite torches, endoscopes (Explorer Premium Inspection Camera), mirrors, binoculars and a camera. There were no survey constraints.

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## 4. Results

### 4.1 Building description

The Science Block surveyed is a two storey, flat roofed building with a single storey link to an adjacent building on the south-east elevation. The north-east elevation faces a tarmac playground and the south-west elevation is adjacent to a narrow strip of grass, the school boundary and gardens of neighbouring houses.

Each of the damaged areas was inspected and described below with photographs to illustrate.

#### TN1

Below the ground floor windows on all elevations of the building the original panels have been over-boarded and the replacement boards are now coming away from the original. The space behind these panels is not suitable for bats due to the level of disturbance, risk of predation and level of shading.

#### TN2

This is a gap at the west corner of the building between the ground and first floors where the over-panelling has parted. The resulting void was inspected by an endoscope camera.



#### TN3

Above and below the first floor windows there is horizontal tongue, groove and veed boarding behind which is building paper and a thin layer of polystyrene.

On the south-west side, below the first window one end of a board has curled away from the studwork leaving a gap. There is a corresponding hole in the building paper behind the boarding. The gaps behind the boarding and building paper were both inspected with the camera.



#### TN4

On the south-east elevation, above the corridor link, one of the horizontal boards above the Science Block first floor window is missing. There are two corresponding holes in the building paper and polystyrene insulation, giving access to the flat roof void. The void was inspected using bright lamps and camera.



#### TN5

This is a section of horizontal board on the north-east elevation above the ground floor windows. The board has started to rot, but at the time of the survey this had not created a gap suitable for bats or birds to enter.



#### TN6

The damage at this location is similar to TN3 but it is above the first floor window on the north-east elevation. There is no corresponding damage to the building paper and polystyrene insulation behind the curled board.



### TN7

This is an oversized hole in the timber cladding above the ground floor windows on the north-east elevation of the building. The hole has been cut for an electric cable and is large enough for both bats and birds to enter.



### TN8

Two oversized holes for electrical cables above the ground floor windows on the north-east elevation. One hole is large enough for both bats and birds to enter.



## 4.2 Bats

Although some of the damage inspected contained gaps or holes of a size that both bats and birds could access, there is no evidence that either bats or birds have exploited these spaces. No bat droppings, urine staining, scratch marks or fur oil staining were found at or behind the gaps or holes. Nor was any bird liming evident. No bats or birds were seen.

The majority of the areas behind the cladding to which there is access will not provide suitable hibernation roosts for bats, as there is insufficient insulation to protect hibernating bats from external temperature variation.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

The damaged cladding on the exterior of the Science Block at Wollaston High School does not support bat roosts or roosting/nesting birds, although access behind the cladding by these species is available at the locations identified in this report.

It is understood that the work on the building will not be undertaken until next year, possibly during the summer holidays. It is therefore strongly recommended, as a preventative measure, that all the damaged areas identified are temporarily repaired to prevent bats or birds commencing roosting/nesting behind the cladding prior to building works commencing.

Should bats start to use the building, repairs could then only be undertaken after obtaining a European protected species licence from Natural England, and this could necessitate further surveys, additional costs and delays. A nesting bird may delay work until the young have fledged which could be well into August.

## 6. References

HMSO (2010) *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations* London: HMSO

HMSO (1981) *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*, London: HMSO

Hundt, L. (2012) *Bat surveys: good practice guidelines*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Bat Conservation Trust

Natural England (2011) Standing advice for protected species [Online], Available: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk> [12<sup>th</sup> December 2012]

MAGIC (Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside) [Online], Available: <http://www.magic.gov.uk> [12<sup>th</sup> December 2012]

## Appendices

### Summary of relevant legislation

#### Legislation relating to birds

All birds, their nests and eggs are afforded protection under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended). It is an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird
- intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built
- intentionally take or destroy the egg(s) of any wild bird

Special penalties are available for offences related to bird species listed on Schedule I of the Act, for which there are additional offences of disturbing these birds at their nests, or their dependent young.

A number of bird species are listed as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England, in Section 74 (known as the UK BAP Priority Habitats/Species) of the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*.

#### Legislation related to bats

All British bat species are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*, as updated by the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*. All British bats are also included in Schedule 2 of the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010*, as European Protected Species.

Taken together, this legislation makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or capture bats;
- Deliberately or recklessly disturb bats (whether in a roost or not); and
- Damage, destroy or obstruct access to a bat roost.

A roost is defined as “any structure or place which (a bat) uses for shelter or protection”. As bats tend to reuse the same roosts, legal opinion is that a roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the time of the survey.

In addition, greater horseshoe, lesser horseshoe, barbastelle and Bechstein’s bat are also listed in Annex II of the *EC Habitats Directive*, which effectively requires that the best of these species’ roosting and foraging sites are designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).