

# Protected Species Scoping Survey: Black Lane Head Farm, Chinley, Derbyshire

#### **ISSUE RECORD**

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The information and advice contained in this report has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

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# CONTENTS PAGE

ISSU	E RECORDI
1	INTRODUCTION1
1.1	Background1
1.2	Site Description1
1.3	Planning / Legislative Context2
2	METHODOLOGY4
2.1	Preliminary Appraisal for Bats4
2.2	Scoping for Protected / Notable Species
2.3	Limitations to Survey5
3	RESULTS
3.1	Preliminary Roost Assessment
3.2	Foraging/Commuting Habitat6
3.3	Nesting Birds7
3.4	Other protected species7
4	EVALUATION
5	RECOMMENDATIONS
5.1	Ecological Enhancement9
6	REFERENCES
LIST	OF TABLES
Table	9 1: Bat box examples
Table	e 2: Bird box examples11
LIST	OF FIGURES
Figur	e 1: Location plan2

# 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

This report has been prepared on behalf of Mr and Mrs Rockliff. It provides the results of a Protected Species Scoping Survey associated with the change of use of a small barn/outbuilding at Black Lane Head Farm, Chinley, Derbyshire. The purpose of this report is to:

- Confirm presence / likely absence of roosting bats (to currently accepted standards for confidence in a negative result);
- Provide outline recommendations for mitigation and/or avoidance measures where appropriate;
- Identify any likely need for licensing by Natural England;
- Identify potential for other protected species; and
- Highlight opportunities for ecological enhancement in relation to bats where appropriate.

In relation to planning and development, this report should be read in conjunction with the reports for any other ecological survey work relating to the site.

The approach to this assessment follows best practice published by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2015), the British Standards Institution (BSI, 2013) and The Bat Conservation Trust (Collins (ed), 2016). Details of individual survey methods and associated supporting information are provided in Section 2.

# 1.2 Site Description

The site comprises a small barn/out building within Black Lane Head Farm. The farm is situated on the corner of the junction between Charley Lane and the A624 (Hayfield Road/ Buxton Road) between the villages of Chinley and Chapel Milton in Derbyshire (grid reference: SK 052 822).

The barn/outbuilding is located adjacent to Charley Lane and the access into Black Lane Head Farm. The farmstead has a number of outbuildings/barns associated with the main farm house. Immediately surrounding the barn/outbuilding lies bare ground with small areas of ephemeral/short perennial vegetation. In the wider landscape, the site is surrounded by agricultural land, predominantly used for grazing livestock, with scattered residential dwellings.

The site location is illustrated overleaf.

Figure 1: Location plan



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# 1.3 Planning / Legislative Context

All British bats are European Protected Species under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). They are also listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and are protected by Parts 4(b), 4(c) and 5 of Section 9 of that Act.

In net effect, it is an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill bats;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb bats in a place of shelter (roost);
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obscure access to a breeding site or resting place (roost); and/or
- Possess, control, transport, sell or exchange a bat or any part of a bat, unless acquired legally.

NB. Because bats use roosts at different times of year and typically return to the same roosts annually, it is a legal opinion that a roost is protected whether bats are in occupancy at the time or not.

Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 the presence of a European protected species such as bats is a material planning consideration. When assessing a planning application, in order to satisfy the three Habitats Directive tests the Local Planning Authority (LPA) requires sufficient information about impacts on the species that are likely to result from the proposals as well as any necessary mitigation or compensatory measures. The test relevant to this report is that which relates to the Favourable Conservation Status of the species.

In addition to this, county and borough/district councils typically have biodiversity policies within their Local Development Frameworks that they must also comply with.

# 2 <u>METHODOLOGY</u>

### 2.1 **Preliminary Appraisal for Bats**

A daytime site visit was carried out on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 2016 with survey methods following current good practice guidelines published by the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins (ed.), 2016).

The survey was carried out by Jessica Eades BSc (Hons) MCIEEM. Jessica has extensive experience in survey and site assessment for bats and is registered to use a Class licence to survey for bats, issued by Natural England (registration numbers: 2015-16543-CLS-CLS) and is appropriately qualified for the surveys based on the CIEEM competencies for species surveys (CIEEM, 2013).

The appraisal comprised an assessment of potential roosting sites as well as suitability of bat foraging and commuting habitats. Survey methods and assessment criteria are described in further detail under the sub-headings below.

#### 2.1.1 **Preliminary Roost Assessment**

A visual inspection was made of the buildings, using binoculars, ladders, high powered torches and endoscopes where necessary to facilitate more detailed inspection of individual features.

The locations and descriptions of any potential roost features (PRFs) such as holes, crevices or internal voids that could be used by roosting bats were recorded on a site plan and PRFs were photographed. A search was also made for any evidence of bat presence such as droppings or feeding remains and where bat droppings were discovered samples were collected for DNA analysis to confirm identification of species.

# 2.1.2 Assessment Criteria

Based on the number, location and type of any potential roost features, the building was categorised as having **negligible**, **low**, **moderate** or **high potential** for roosting bats, or **confirmed roost** where direct evidence of bat presence was encountered. NB. The overall roost category assigned to a building must be determined by the most suitable feature present, so that a building with lots of very poor features would be categorised as negligible or low potential but if there is also one very suitable feature it would be categorised as moderate or high potential.

Evaluation of roost potential is necessarily subjective and relies on the professional judgment of the surveyor.

# 2.2 Scoping for Protected / Notable Species

The habitats present were assessed for their potential to support any legally protected or otherwise notable species and any incidental sightings or field signs discovered during the surveys were recorded.

All British wildlife and countryside legislation, policy and guidance were taken into consideration including;

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended);
- EC Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds 79/409/EEC;
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992;
- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000;
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997;
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006; and
- The UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework (formerly known as UK BAP)

#### 2.3 Limitations to Survey

#### 2.3.1 Fieldwork

The survey work was conducted in optimal weather conditions, and all areas of the building were able to be accessed during the daytime survey.

#### 2.2.3 Lifespan of Data

The results and recommendations contained within this report are considered to be valid for up to two years from the date of survey, assuming that there are no changes to the buildings during this time. After that period, an update may be required in order to inform ecological constraints to development proposals and/or accompany a planning submission.

# 3 <u>RESULTS</u>

#### 3.1 Preliminary Roost Assessment

The barn/outbuilding was approximately 3m x 4m made from a breeze block construction and reaching approximately 2-2.5m high and adjoins a stone build barn of a similar size on to the north.

The mortar between the breezeblock is generally in very good condition, with no missing mortar. On the eastern side of the building there is a ventilation block located in the upper middle of the wall. This block was partially filled with expanding foam, and appears to have been block for some time, as there is a significant amount of cob webs within the remaining void. The ventilation block did not go through to the interior of the building. Also on the eastern side of the building is a small crack between the blocks, although this crack is too small for a bat to access.

The building has a shallow sloping roof leading down towards Charley Lane. The roof has overhanging eaves on the western side of the building. They overhang the building by 1m. On top of the roof lies an established green roof containing a number of wildflowers and grasses. The roof appears to be relatively new in construction (6-12 months) having a modern waterproof membrane between the green roof and the timber roof structure. The roof sits tight to the wall tops on the eastern and southern sides.

There are a number of small gaps around the timbers where the eaves extend beyond the edge of the building. Each of these gaps were heavily cobwebbed.

On the western side of the building were two open doorways with no door fixtures. These formed the only access points into the interior of the building

Internally the lower half of the walls were thinly rendered. The eastern, western and southern internal walls had no gaps which could be accessed by bats. The northern enteral wall, which adjoined the adjacent stone barn had a number of cracks within the upper half of the wall. All of these cracks were inspected internally using an endoscope and found to be predominantly either too shallow to provide shelter for a roosting bat, or heavily cobwebbed internally. Two cracks penetrated deeper into the cavity of the wall, although no evidence of roosting bats was found within these two crevices. They were found to contain a significant amount of dust.

The interior of the barn was found to be light and relatively draughty at the time of the survey, showing that internal conditions are likely to fluctuate widely, which added to the conclusion that the building provided **negligible potential** to support roosting bats.

No evidence of bats was found within the interior or exterior of the building.

# 3.2 Foraging/Commuting Habitat

The wider landscape surrounding the farmstead provides habitats which may be used by foraging bats, although much of the area was considered to be of low quality foraging habitat (improved grazing pasture separated by dry stone walls) with the exception of a high quality thin strip of woodland to the west which forms a linear feature within the wider landscape.

# 3.3 Nesting Birds

No evidence of nesting birds was seen within the barn.

#### 3.4 Other protected species

All other protected species were considered during the survey. No evidence of protected species, such as badger *Meles meles*, reptiles or amphibians was found during the site survey. Given the habitats present, there is negligible potential to support any other protected species.

# 4 EVALUATION

This building was considered to provide **negligible potential** for roosting bats due to there being no gaps or crevices on the exterior of the building within which a bat could roost. The interior was very light in nature, and internal conditions likely to fluctuate widely due to the two door openings on the western side of the building allowing prevailing winds to enter the building. All gaps within the interior of the northern wall were inspected using an endoscope and found to be either unsuitable for roosting bats (due to being shallow or heavily cobwebbed) or open, but containing a large amount of dust. The presence of dust indicates that bats have not been using these features for roosting, as this dust would have been removed when bats were crawling into the crevice due to the size of the feature.

All potential foraging habitats within the wider area will be retained and remain unaffected by the works.

The proposed change of use of the barn will have no effect on roosting bats. No

#### 4.3 Nesting Birds

Although no presence of nesting birds within the barn was identified, and future bird nesting is considered unlikely, due to a construction of the barn, contractors should remain vigilant for active nests.

If an active nest is encountered at any time, work to the area must cease and may not recommence until all chicks have fledged.

# 5 <u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u>

#### 5.1 Ecological Enhancement

National planning policy recommends that all developments incorporate ecological enhancement where possible, therefore consideration should be given to the following suggestions;

- Bat boxes; and
- Bird boxes.

#### 5.1.1 Bat boxes

Whilst the barn currently provides negligible potential for roosting bats, provisions in the form of at least one bat boxes may be considered to enhance the site for bats.

There are two main types of bat box recommended for the site, the Schwegler box 1FF, which is manufactured from long-lasting Woodcrete, or the traditional wooden box. A mixture of boxes would ideally be used, as it is not known which are most used by bats. Online retailers for bat boxes include NHBS, Envisage Wildcare or Jacobi Jayne.

#### Table 1: Bat box examples

Туре	Photo	Source
• Schwegler box -1FF		http://www.nhbs.com/title/158636/1 ff-schwegler-bat-box-with-built-in- wooden-rear-panel
<ul> <li>Traditional wooden bat box</li> </ul>		http://www.nhbs.com/title/173588/c havenage-bat-box

Boxes should be positioned between 1.5 - 5m high but if they are going to be checked for usage (by a licensed bat worker) they should be positioned at a height that is easily accessible by ladder.

General guidelines for the positioning of bat roosting features are as follows;

- A clear flight line into the box is very important for bats;
- 1.5 5m above the ground and away from features where predators could sit; and
- Bats will often use features such as hedgerows or water courses as flight lines. Therefore, if a bat roosting feature can be positioned in line with a linear feature this will enhance its suitability for bats (although this is not a necessity).

As all bats and their roosts are legally protected, once boxes are in position they should remain undisturbed, unless a licensed bat worker is present. A licensed bat worker must check any boxes that need to be replaced, to ensure that bats are not present and should also be present if the boxes need to be cleaned (for example, if a bird nest is suspected within a bat box and needs to be removed once it is no longer in use).

Boxes can be put up at any time of year but installation over winter is ideal, as the boxes are then available for bats to use once they become active in the spring.

#### 5.1.2 *Lighting*

A sensitive lighting scheme needs to be considered should bat boxes be installed on the building once works are completed. This will need to ensure that any bat boxes remain dark and that linear features, used by bats as flight lines or for foraging, remain unlit. Light shields may be required to prevent light spillage into these areas, or the use of low level, downward angled, low intensity bulbs.

#### 5.1.3 Bird boxes

Whilst nesting opportunities will remain for birds on the flat roof building the installation of boxes across the farm would encourage more nesting birds to use the site. Ideally, the installation of boxes for both smaller and larger birds would be preferred, to encourage the diversity of birds looking to nest at the site; see the table below for details. Bird boxes should be installed above head-height on buildings near to vegetation and mature trees and should offer unobstructed fly-in access.

#### Table 2: Bird box examples

Туре	Photo	Source
<ul> <li>Bird box (open front, small)</li> <li>Robin</li> <li>Pied wagtail</li> </ul>		http://www.nhbs.com/title/202241/tr aditional-open-fronted-wooden- bird-nest-box
<ul> <li>Bird box (hole)</li> <li>Small hole:</li> <li>House sparrow</li> <li>Blue tit</li> <li>Large hole:</li> <li>Starling</li> </ul>		http://www.nhbs.com/title/181549/tr aditional-wooden-bird-nest-box
Bird box (open front, large) • Blackbird	2	http://www.nhbs.com/title/181100/b lackbird-fsc-nest- box?bkfno=193079&ca_id=1495&g clid=CjwKEAjwqJ67BRCzzJ7Hy- LYIFYSJABwp9PG42GHQwIPWZ w7WaP9AFJaQPReUJm9rA_v9nth gY7J2hoCRhvw_wcB

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