

**Update Baseline Bat Survey  
Outbuilding at Little Harbour's Farm  
Woodgate  
Bromsgrove  
Worcestershire**

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## **UPDATE BASELINE BAT SURVEY – OUTBUILDING AT LITTLE HARBOURS FARM – WOODGATE – BROMSGROVE - WORCESTERSHIRE**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report presents the results of an update baseline bat survey of an outbuilding at Little Harbours Farm, Woodgate, near Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. Grid ref. SO958660. It is proposed the outbuilding is converted to residential accommodation.

The objective of the survey was to carry out a detailed inspection of the building to assess its suitability for bats and to look for evidence of their presence. The initial survey was undertaken on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 2015 and updated on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January 2018.

An assessment of the suitability of the building for nesting birds was also undertaken.

Site photographs are included in appendix 1.

### **2. LEGISLATION**

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2017 provide protection for Bats against killing, injury and disturbance. The legislation also protects their places of shelter, protection, breeding and resting sites.

### **3. BAT BEHAVIOUR AND CONTEXT FOR PROTECTION**

Bats may use a variety of buildings of modern and older construction, caves, mines, hollow trees *etcetera* as roosts.

Bat roosts serve different purposes and different conditions are required for hibernation, mating and breeding. Other roosts may be used as overnight stops during summer feeding. Female bats gather in maternity roosts in June and July to give birth and rear their young.

The seasonal changes in roost sites means that a roost may be unoccupied for a large part of the year; however it is still protected by law when unoccupied.

Bats are considered to be of conservation concern because of significant declines in numbers, with some species having become very rare. Reasons for this include loss or degradation of foraging habitats, loss of roost sites, poisoning from timber treatment, predation and persecution by man.

#### **4. SITE DESCRIPTION**

The site is located in a rural situation. The farm is surrounded by arable and pasture land with a network of hedgerows.

The building is constructed of breezeblock and has an asbestos roof with wooden supports internally. It is divided into sections with some used for stabling and some for storage.

Abutting the barn to the east is an asbestos roofed lean-to open at its northern and with metal supports internally. The southern aspect is breezeblock with wooden slats above. Otherwise the lean to is open another barn adjoining to the east.

This also has an asbestos roof with concrete supports internally. It is metal sided with large openings on its northern and southern sides. Both buildings are used for storage. These latter buildings would need to be demolished to enable the conversion.

Site conditions had not changed when the survey was updated on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January 2018.

#### **5. METHODOLOGY**

The inspection of the buildings was undertaken by Elizabeth McKay on both occasions, a Consultant Ecologist and licenced bat worker with 25 years of experience. An assessment of the buildings suitability for bats was carried out.

A thorough search was also made of the buildings internally and externally, during daylight hours, for evidence of bat droppings; food remains or characteristic grease marks at potential exit/entrance points or bats themselves.

A general assessment of the site was made in order to establish whether there were likely to be any other protected species affected by the proposals. This included checks for evidence of nesting birds.

#### **6. RESULTS**

##### **Daylight Assessment**

No evidence of bat droppings was found within the outbuildings on either occasion. Whilst the building to be converted was used for storage and stabling – therefore some sections had been recently disturbed – there were a number of sections undisturbed where evidence might be found. This remained the case in January 2018 when the survey was updated.

Bats could fly freely throughout the majority of the building to be converted – however the building is lacking in roosting opportunities for crevice dwelling species due to the nature of the roof construction.

A limited number of butterfly wings were found scattered around certain sections on both occasions. These are a typical prey item of Brown Long-eared bats, so this could indicate that they use the barn for foraging. Modern farm outbuildings are often used by bats in this way.

Likewise the two attached modern outbuildings to the east could provide foraging opportunities for bats which sometimes favour the more sheltered locations for finding insects, but they are lacking in roosting opportunities because of their construction.

Whilst free hanging bats such as Lesser Horseshoes could use the outbuildings, no evidence was found of droppings on either occasion.

No evidence of nesting birds was noted at the time of survey on either occasion, though it remains possible that nesting birds could use the buildings. However nesting locations are also limited.

## **7. CONCLUDING SUMMARY**

No evidence of bat droppings was found within the affected building or adjoining outbuildings on either occasion. Whilst there was some disturbance to the buildings, it would be expected evidence would be found in undisturbed areas if bats were using the building regularly, as they can fly freely throughout the majority of the outbuildings.

Because the buildings lack roof linings or other external features which might be used by crevice dwelling species, their suitability for roosting bats is low. No further survey has been recommended. No evidence of free hanging Lesser Horseshoe bats was noted on either survey visit.

Some occasional scattered butterfly wings were noted on both survey visits which may indicate the outbuildings are used for foraging by Brown long-eared bats. However foraging habitat is not protected.

No evidence of nesting birds was noted during either survey and nesting opportunities are limited. However as birds will use a variety of outbuildings of modern and older construction, the possibility that they might nest cannot be entirely ruled out. Precautionary recommendations have been made below because of the legal protection which nesting birds receive.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Ideally the building works would commence outside the nesting season. If works commence within the nesting season March to September a check would need to be made because of the legal protection which nesting birds receive.
2. It is recommended exterior lighting is minimised post construction by using low-level bollard style, muted, cowled or directional lighting. This is because foraging bats and birds are deterred by strong lighting.

## **9. REFERENCES**

English Nature (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines, January 2004*. English Nature, Peterborough, UK.

JNCC, (1999). *The Bat Workers' Manual*. Eds. A.J. Mitchell-Jones & A.P. McLeish. JNCC, Peterborough, UK.

## **APPENDIX 1 – SITE PHOTOGRAPHS**



AERIAL PHOTO – SHOWING LOCATION OF OUTBUILDING



PHOTO 1 – OUTBUILDING – WEST FACING ASPECT



PHOTO 2 – WESTERN ASPECT OF OUTBUILDING



PHOTO 3 – NORTH FACING ASPECT



PHOTO 4 – OUTBUILDING FROM THE SOUTH-EAST



PHOTO 5 – OUTBUILDING FROM SOUTH-EAST AND BUILDING ADJACENT



PHOTO 6 – WEST FACING ASPECT – TAKEN FROM SOUTH



PHOTO 7 – BUILDING TO EAST OF OUTBUILDING



PHOTO 8 – OUTBUILDING TO BE DEMOLISHED ADJACENT



PHOTO 9 – OUTBUILDING TO BE DEMOLISHED ADJACENT



PHOTO 10 – OUTBUILDING INTERNALLY – ROOF CONSTRUCTION

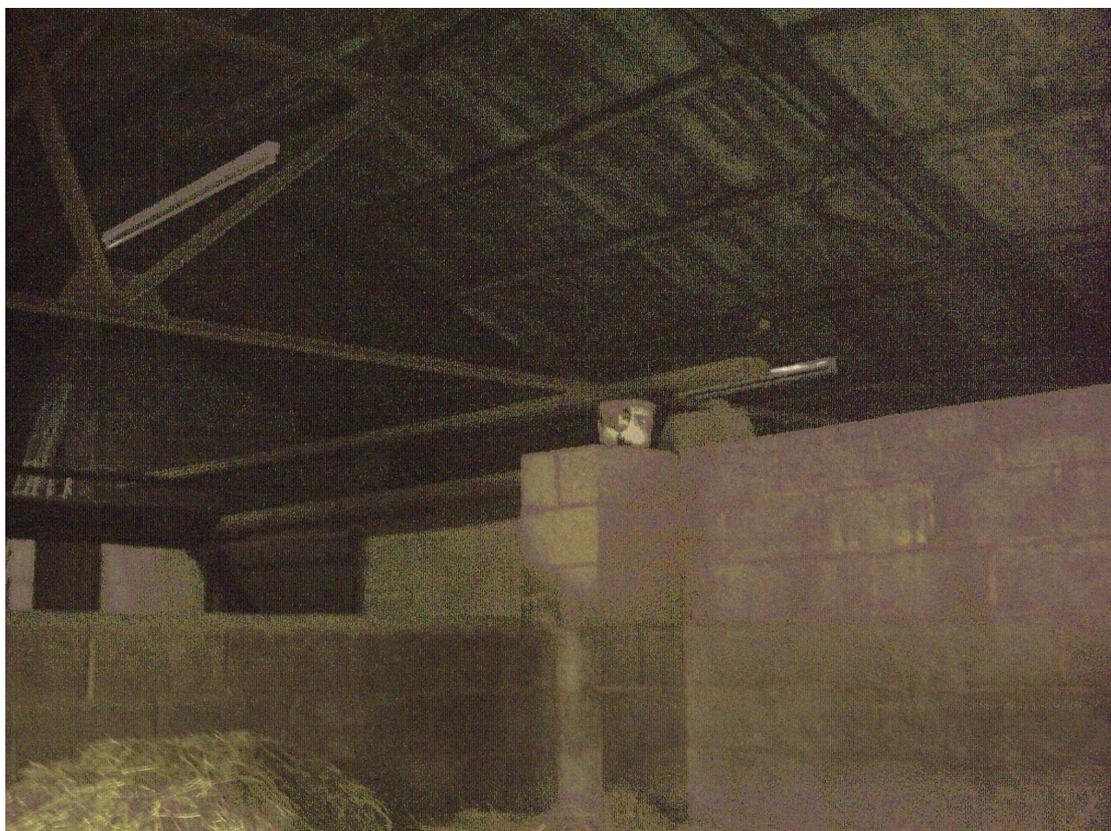


PHOTO 11 – OUTBUILDING INTERNALLY



PHOTO 12 – OUTBUILDING INTERNALLY