



BJ Collins
PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYORS

PROTECTED SPECIES (BAT) SURVEY

**BARN 4
GREAT NORTH ROAD
TORWORTH
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
DN22 8NU**

A report to:

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April 2020

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SUMMARY

This report has been prepared by BJ Collins – Protected Species Surveyors Ltd. for Nettledale Ltd, on behalf of the site owners. The report provides the results of a protected species survey focused on bats of the land and barn known as Barn 4 at Manor Farm, Torworth. Barn 4 is located at the central Ordnance Survey grid reference SK65688683. The proposal is to convert the barn to residential use.

The objective of the survey is to identify the potential for protected species or areas of wildlife value which might constitute possible constraints to the proposed development.

A range of outbuildings referred to as Barn Complex 2 and Barn Complex 3 situated immediately to the south of the proposed development were previously surveyed in 2019 by BJ Collins PSS Ltd. A roost site supporting two Brown Long-eared bats (*Plecotus auritus*) was identified in the stable block. The same group of buildings were surveyed in 2016 where a small group of Brown Long-eared bats were found within the first floor hayloft of the threshing barn.

This report contains the findings of a preliminary bat roost assessment of Barn Complex 4 and the results of a scoping survey for other protected species in the immediate surrounding area.

The preliminary bat roost assessment was undertaken outside the peak activity season for surveying bats and could not be followed up with an emergence and activity survey at the time.

No evidence of roosting bats was found during the preliminary roost assessment. Potential roost features were identified within the exterior fabric of the building. Barn 4 is assessed as being of low potential of supporting roosting bats.

It is recommended that a minimum of one emergence and activity survey is carried out in the active season which runs from May to the end of August. If a bat roost is identified or behaviour is observed that is indicative of roosting, then further surveys will be recommended. If multiple surveys are necessary, they must be separated by a minimum period of two weeks.

Upon completion of the emergence and activity surveys it is recommended that an updated report is provided to include the survey results and inform further recommendations to safeguard habitats that are important to bats. This is to ensure that bats can continue to use the site post development and that there is no loss in biodiversity.

An active pigeon's nest was found inside the barn and the niches in the stonework have potential to support smaller species of nesting bird. If the redevelopment of the building is undertaken during the bird breeding season then works should proceed depending upon the results of a nesting bird survey, carried out by a competent ecologist.

No field signs or habitats associated with other protected species were identified within the proposed development plot or the immediate surrounding area.

1 INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by BJ Collins – Protected Species Surveyors Ltd. for Nettledale Ltd, on behalf of the site owners. The report provides the results of a protected species survey, focused upon bats, of the land and barn known as Barn 4 at Manor Farm, Torworth. Barn 4 is located at the central Ordnance Survey grid reference SK65688683.

The proposal is to convert the barn to residential use. A red line boundary plan of the site has been supplied in Appendix 1. The objective of the survey is to identify the potential for protected species or areas of wildlife value which might constitute possible constraints to the proposed development.

A range of outbuildings referred to as Barn Complex 2 and Barn Complex 3, is situated immediately to the south of the survey area, both were previously surveyed in 2019 by BJ Collins PSS Ltd.

In Barn Complex 2 a roost site supporting two Brown Long-eared bats (*Plecotus auritus*), was identified in the stable block. During a further 2019 emergence and activity survey, roost sites utilised by an individual Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and one of the Myotis species were located within Barn Complex 3. Activity by Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*) and Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) was also recorded during the surveys.

The same group of buildings were surveyed in 2016, and a small group of Brown Long-eared bats were found within the first floor hayloft of the threshing barn (Complex 2).

The legislation with regards to the protected species relevant to the site is listed below.

1.1 Legislation applicable to bats

All species of British bat and their roosts are protected under British law by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and bats are classified as European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('the 2017 Regulations'). This has recently been amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (2019) which continue the same provision for European protected species, licensing requirements, and protected areas after Brexit.

The legislation makes it an offence to kill, injure or disturb a bat and/or to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place for a bat. It is also an offence to disturb the animals such that it impairs their ability to survive, to reproduce, to nurture their young, or such that it impairs their ability to hibernate or migrate. Under this legislation development work that could affect a bat or bat roost can only be permitted under a licence from Natural England.

Licences in respect of European Protected Species affected by development can be granted under Section 55(2) (e) of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (2019), for the purpose of preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment.

Under Section see Regulation 55(9) of the Regulations licences can only be issued if Natural England is satisfied that:

- There is no satisfactory alternative to the work specification and
- The action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

Natural England aim to process EPS licence applications within 35 working days of receipt and Low Impact Class licenses are typically registered within 14 working days of receipt.

1.2 Legislation applicable to breeding birds

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), all native birds and their nests, whilst in use, are protected from harm, disturbance or destruction during the breeding season. To avoid conflict, development work that could affect breeding birds should be timed to take place outside of the breeding season, variable between March and September. Note that a nest is protected from the beginning of its construction until the young have fledged and have left the nest.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Situation of Manor Farm, Torworth



Photograph 1: Situation of Barn 4, Manor Farm, Torworth

Barn 4 is situated in the centre of the village of Torworth, alongside the A638 highway. To the north, south and immediately east is low density residential development. To the west and beyond the housing to the north, south and east of the site is mostly surrounded by arable farming with the occasional paddock.

A Local Wildlife Site of Daneshill Lakes and Woodland is located some 0.7km to the east and there is connectivity to the village from this area by a range of mature treelines and hedgerows bordering fields between the village and the reserve. These habitats have potential to provide foraging and roosting opportunities for bats. To north west is the River Ryton the nearest point being 2.3km from the survey area which has potential to facilitate connectivity with the wider landscape.

The former gravel pits, Mattersey Marsh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located approximately 1.6km to the north east is designated for its marsh plant communities. To the north approximately 2.5km from the site is Scrooby Top Quarry SSSI designated for geological interest.

A review of the dataset on the government's Magic website found no granted EPS licence applications within a 2.5km radius of the survey area. A Low Impact Class Licence has been granted for the works to Barn Complex 2.

2.2 Description of Barn 4



Photograph 2: East elevation of Barn 4

Barn 4 is situated on the west boundary of the proposed development plot immediately adjacent to the A638 highway. At the north gable are the remnants of the walls of a previous structure which has subsequently been encroached by vegetation.

The west elevation of Barn 4 is constructed from stone. The gables are constructed from solid brick. An open window with a stone lintel is present at the south gable. The building is open at the east elevation and the structure is supported by eight brick pillars.

The roof is pitched and covered with corrugated cement fibre sheets overlaid over a traditional king post timber roofing frame. The verges are sealed with mortar. The interior contains one single cell which is open from the ground to the underside of the roof covering.



Photograph 3: South gable and west aspect of Barn 4

2.3 Description of immediate surrounding area



Photograph 4: Land to the east of Barn 4

At the north east aspect of Barn 4 is a disused manure heap. Rough grassland is present at the east aspect. Stone walls form the north and west boundaries of the site. The A638 highway at the west aspect has street lighting however there is potential commuting and foraging habitat for bats in the form of a treeline containing mature trees and a hedgerow which runs along the west side of the A638 opposite Barn 4.



Photograph 5: A638 highway to the west of Barn 4

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Preliminary bat roost assessment

A visual inspection of the interior and exterior of the building was undertaken by an experienced licenced bat ecologist on 7th April 2020. Equipment used included a powerful torch, camera and binoculars. The objective of the survey was to inspect the building for evidence of bat-use and to identify features that could potentially support roosting bats and to assess the likelihood of these features being used. This included looking for droppings, urine staining, worn surfaces and the bats themselves (alive or dead).

3.2 Breeding birds scoping survey

Evidence of breeding birds within the fabric of the buildings was documented during the scoping survey on 7th April 2020.

3.3 Survey constraints

The preliminary roost assessment was conducted outside the designated survey season for bats and therefore could not be followed up with an emergence and activity survey at the time. This constraint has been addressed in the recommendations section of the report.

3.4 Weather conditions

The weather conditions for the preliminary roost assessment carried out on 7th April 2020 were dry and bright enabling the surveyor to view the external fabrics of the building.

3.5 Personnel

The preliminary roost assessment 7th April 2020 was carried out M. Mackinnon (Natural England licence no. 2015-16652-CLS).

4 SURVEY RESULTS

4.1 Preliminary bat roost assessment results

No evidence of roosting bats was found during the visual inspection of Barn 4. The interior of the building is easily accessible to wildlife, however no evidence of use in the form of droppings or feeding remains was identified. The roofing frame is in good structural condition and the joins in the timber are tight fitting resulting in a lack of roosting opportunities.

The visual inspection of the construction materials identified features with the potential to support roosting bats. One of these features is gaps around the timber wall plate at the south west corner of the building. Along the south elevation small gaps were found at the eaves which have potential to support roosting by crevice dwelling species. Gaps were also found in the stonework at this elevation which also have potential to be utilised by roosting bats.

At the south gable areas of missing mortar were noted at the verge thereby resulting in potential for bats to roost between the top of the wall and underside of the roof covering. At the south gable apex a gap is present beneath the ridge covering.



Photograph 6: Gaps around wall plate at south elevation



Photograph 7: Gaps at eaves of west elevation



Photograph 8: An example of gap in stonework at west elevation

4.2 Scoping survey results: breeding birds

An active pigeon's nest was found between the beams of the double ridge inside the barn. The interior of the barn is easily accessible to breeding birds and the timber roofing frame may appeal to species such as Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) however there were no redundant nests to indicate this species has previously nested at the site.

4.3 Scoping survey results: other protected species

No evidence of use or field signs by other protected species was identified during the ecological walkover. There are no areas of standing water which could offer breeding habitat for amphibians. Rabbit droppings were found across the grassland to the east of Barn 4.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Bats

The assessment of Barn 4 has been made based on the extent of the potential roost features and context within the surrounding area. Barn 4 is assessed as having features with low potential of supporting roosting bats. The National Guidelines (2016) specify that to provide confidence in the absence of roosting bats from building is categorised as of “low bat roost potential” a single emergence and activity survey should be undertaken.

The survey must be undertaken when bats are active between May to the end of August and in suitable weather conditions. If a bat roost is identified during the survey or behaviour is observed to indicate a roost site is present then further surveys will be recommended to inform a mitigation strategy and satisfy EPS licence criteria. If multiple surveys are necessary they must be separated by a minimum interval of two weeks.

If roosting bats are found, no works with the potential to disturb or damage a roost site can proceed without an EPS licence and precautionary measures designed to safeguard roosting bats have been implemented.

It is recommended that an updated report is provided upon completion of the bat emergence and activity survey. The information gathered from the survey such as the diversity of species present, how bats use the site *eg* for foraging or commuting will inform recommendations such as precautionary approaches to the development, including safeguards to conserve areas of high bat activity and ensure there is no net loss in biodiversity post development.

5.2 Breeding birds

Nesting birds we are actively reading within the barn and furthermore habitat was identified inside the building and the crevices within the exterior stonework that has the potential to support breeding birds. If the commencement of works is within the bird breeding season, variable from March to September, the project maybe constrained by legislation designed to protect breeding birds.

If it is not practicable to avoid the bird breeding season a precautionary approach has been provided below.

5.2.1 Best practice recommendations for breeding birds

If works are to commence during the bird breeding season (March to September inclusive) then a nesting bird survey will be required and should be undertaken by a competent ecologist. Note that the discovery of a bird's nest would lead to the requirement to delay any work in that immediate vicinity. The area around the nest site of approximately five metres around and above would need to be cordoned off until the young have hatched and have fledged and left the nest.

6 REFERENCES

Collins B., (2019) **2019 bat emergence surveys, Barn Complex 2, Manor Farm, Torworth**. BJ Collins PSS Ltd, Nottinghamshire.

Collins, J. (ed) (2016) **Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd Edition**, Bat Conservation Trust, London.

7 APPENDIX

7.1 Appendix 1: Red line boundary plan Barn 4, Manor Farm, Torworth

