

ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
BARN AT HOWARD FARM, STRATTON



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COMMISSIONED BY PW PLANNING LTD

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NATURAL ENGLAND BAT LICENCE (No. 2015-11493-CLS-CLS)

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## CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
INTRODUCTION	4
SITE DESCRIPTION	4
METHODOLOGY	4
LIMITATIONS	5
RESULTS	5
LEGISLATION	6
RECOMMENDATION AND MITIGATION	7
APPENDIX	

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- J.L Ecology Ltd was commissioned by PW Planning Ltd to carry out an Ecological Impact Assessment of a barn at Howard Farm, Howard Lane, Stratton, Bude, Cornwall, EX23 9TF.
- The survey was commissioned to inform any possible ecological impacts resulting from a planning application for the conversion of the building to residential use; and was carried out on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2020 by Joseph Lane BSc [Hons], who is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and holder of a Natural England bat licence.
- Survey methodology comprised an internal and external building inspection.
- The proposed development will not affect the favourable conservation status of any local bat population. No signs of bats were associated with any element of the structures to be affected; no inaccessible crevice dwelling opportunities were identified.
- Swallows had previously nested within the barn. Commencement of works would best be undertaken outside the nesting bird season [March – August]. Alternatively, the building should be made inaccessible or unsuitable for this purpose during the same period. Suitable opportunities for nesting swallows will remain available within the adjacent barns and outbuildings.

## INTRODUCTION

J.L Ecology Ltd was commissioned by PW Planning Ltd to carry out an Ecological Impact Assessment of a barn at Howard Farm, Howard Lane, Stratton, Bude, Cornwall, EX23 9TF.

The survey was commissioned to inform any possible ecological impacts resulting from a planning application for the conversion of the building to residential use; and was carried out on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2020 by Joseph Lane BSc [Hons], who is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and holder of a Natural England bat licence.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The survey area comprised a single-storey, block-built barn with a breathable-membrane lined part slate part tile roof. The building was situated on the southern edge of Stratton c.700m east of the A39. The wider landscape was dominated by pasture and woodland set within a hedgebank network.



*Figures 1 & 2. Barn viewed from the south-west [left] & north-east [right]*

The site is located at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference SS 230 056.

## METHODOLOGY

### DESK STUDY

A desktop data search to identify statutory designated sites and records of protected species within 1km of the site was carried out using the government's *MAGIC Nature on the Map* website. Aerial photographs were also interpreted.

## BATS

### BUILDING INSPECTION:

A daytime site visit was carried out to identify potential roost sites associated with the building to be affected by the proposed development. The exterior and interior of the building were examined for signs of occupation by bats (urine staining, fur rubbing and droppings) and suitable crevices and features noted. *A high-powered torch, endoscope and ladder were available.*

## BIRDS

The exterior and interior of the building were surveyed for signs of use by nesting birds.

## LIMITATIONS

It should be noted that this survey takes no account of seasonal differences and a lack of signs of any particular species does not confirm its absence, merely that there was no indication of its presence at the time of survey.

If no action or development of this land takes place within twelve months of the date of this survey, then the findings of this survey will no longer be considered reliable and should be repeated.

## RESULTS

### DESK STUDY

No statutory sites were situated within 1km of SS 230 056; The site falls within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone but does not match any corresponding development descriptions.

## BATS

### BUILDING INSPECTION

No signs of bats were associated with any internal or external elements of the building.

## BIRDS

Breeding swallows had previously utilised the barn.



*Figure 3. Interior view of barn*

#### LEGISLATION AND SPECIES INFORMATION

##### BIRDS

All British birds, their nests and eggs [with certain exceptions] are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 as amended. This makes it an offence to: intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird; intentionally damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

##### BATS

All bat species and their roost sites are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended and are included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 and amended by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (Amendment) Regulations 2007 (the Habitats Regulations). Under UK law a bat roost is "any structure or place which any wild [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. Microchiroptera (the insectivorous species of bat found in the UK) are able to exploit a wide diversity of roost sites such as caves, trees, tunnels, mines and buildings. Species which have adapted to utilise buildings as alternative roost sites make use of various parts of the building including hollow walls, roof spaces and areas above soffit boarding, behind weatherboarding and under hanging tiles; habitats which can be replicated when designing mitigation measures. It is important to note that individual roosts are not usually occupied all year round, as bat colonies move frequently (depending upon the species). The same site, however, does tend to be occupied at the same time each year.

## RECOMMENDATION AND MITIGATION

### DESK STUDY

No statutory sites would be affected by the proposals.

### BATS

The proposed development will not affect the favourable conservation status of any local bat population. No signs of bats were associated with any element of the structures to be affected; no inaccessible crevice dwelling opportunities were identified.

### BIRDS

Swallows had previously nested within the barn. Commencement of works would best be undertaken outside the nesting bird season [March – August]. Alternatively, the building should be made inaccessible or unsuitable for this purpose during the same period. Suitable opportunities for nesting swallows will remain available within the adjacent barns and outbuildings.

*External south or west-facing building elevations have the potential to incorporate bat boxes; external east or north-facing elevations have the potential to incorporate bird boxes. Such features would enhance the potential ecological value of the site.*



*Figures 4 & 5. Indicative bat and bird box types*

## APPENDIX – NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.

Below are excerpts within the NPPF of how the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

Paragraph 170

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

Paragraph 174

To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity<sup>56</sup>; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation<sup>57</sup>; and
- b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Paragraph 175

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons<sup>58</sup> and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Paragraph 176

The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

- a) potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;
- b) listed or proposed Ramsar sites<sup>59</sup>; and
- c) sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

Paragraph 177

The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment because of its potential impact on a habitats site is being planned or determined.

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