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SPRINGLEAZE STABLES, BRIDGERULE, DEVON

Bat & Barn Owl Survey

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A REPORT TO:

Mr & Mrs Huggins
Springleaze
Bridgerule
Holsworthy
Devon

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Springleaze Stables – Bat & Barn Owl Survey

1 Introduction

Penpont Ecology Services Ltd was appointed to undertake a Bat and Nesting Bird Survey at Springleaze Stables. This was undertaken to support a planning application to convert the stables to residential use.

Barn Owls are specially protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, making it an offence to;

- intentionally kill, injure or take them
- take, damage or destroy their nest or eggs
- disturb them at the nest

Bats are a European Protected Species under the EC Habitats Directive. In England and Wales all bat species are fully protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Under this legislation it is illegal to:

- intentionally or deliberately* kill, injure or capture (or take) bats
- deliberately disturb bats (whether in a roost or not)
- recklessly disturb roosting bats or obstruct access to their roosts
- damage or destroy bat roosts
- possess or transport a bat or any part of a bat, unless acquired legally
- sell or exchange bats, or parts of bats.

** In a court, 'deliberately' will probably be interpreted as someone who, although not intending to capture/injure or kill a bat, performed the relevant action, being sufficiently informed and aware of the consequence his/her action will most likely have.*

Some bat species are included on the S41 list of UK Biodiversity Action Plan species. Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, local authorities must consider the conservation of these species in planning decisions.

2 Site Description

Springleaze is located in the parish of Marhamchurch approximately 6km south east of Bude at OS Grid Reference: SS 259 039 (Fig 1). The barn lies within a small farmyard comprising two residential dwellings and a stable block. Surrounding fields are in agricultural production including permanent pasture, grass leys and arable. The fields are bordered by Cornish hedgebanks which form a network of connectivity to fragmented, small pockets of surrounding woodland within the riparian valleys of the Rivers Neet and Tamar tributaries (Fig 2). The barn is served by the B3254 road (0.5km) to the east, and the A3072 road (1km) to the north.



Fig 1 – OS Location map (scale 1:25 000).

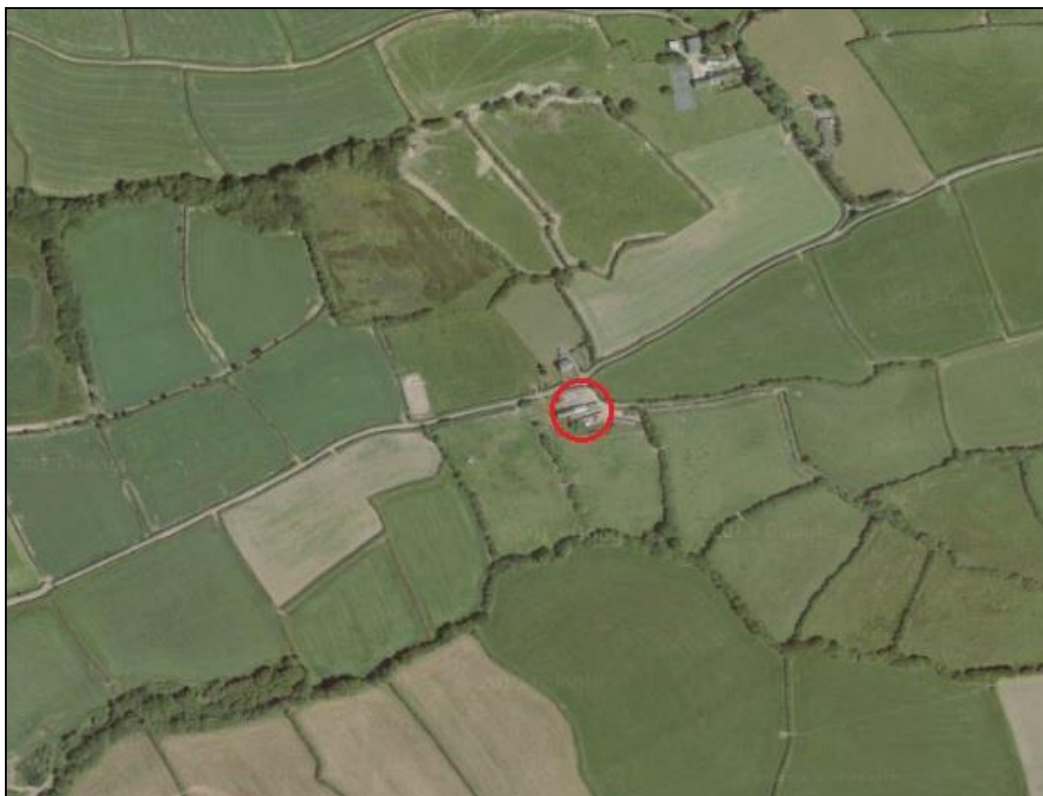


Fig 2 – Aerial photograph of site showing surrounding land-use.

Springleaze Stables is situated to the south east of a small farmyard and comprises two buildings adjoined by a short section of corrugated metal roofing (Figs 3 & 4).



Fig 3 – Springleaze Stables.



Fig 4 – Springleaze Stables.

3 Survey Methodology

3.1 Desk Study

A search of local records was made to identify any previous records of Barn Owls and bats in the area.

3.2 Barn Owls

Springleaze Stables and its surrounding environs, were surveyed for Barn Owls using methodologies outlined by Natural England (2002) and the Barn Owl Trust (2010), and included looking for:

- Individuals, corpses, feathers, droppings and pellets
- Nests & potential nesting sites

3.3 Bats

The bat survey was conducted in accordance with guidelines given by Natural England and the Bat Conservation Trust in '*Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*' (Collins, 2016) and '*Bat Worker's Manual*' (Mitchell-Jones, 1999). The bat survey was carried out to determine presence/likely absence of bat species, and comprised a building inspection including:

The building inspection included:

- an inspection (with a high powered torch where necessary) of the eaves, ridge beams and hips, and any other likely building habitat for bats; for signs of bats and individuals
- examination of walls and floors for droppings, dead individuals and skeletons
- a search for signs of bats including oily stains at entrance/exit holes, feeding remains, lack of cobwebs, characteristic smells and sounds
- an inspection of the surrounding area for suitable habitats.

4 Survey Results

4.1 Desk study

The desk study identified the following records of Barn Owls:

Table 1 – Records of Barn Owls

Location	Date	Distance	Recorder
Bude	1991-2010	Within 10km	ERCCIS* & BTO*

* Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and Isles of Scilly

* British Trust for Ornithology

Barn Owls (and other owl species) require mixed farmland with rough grazing, and habitat suitable for their food source, ie. small mammals. Barn Owls commonly nest in tall, mature trees and in the eaves of larger, older agricultural buildings (BOT, 2010).

A search identified records of Barn Owls within 10km of the site, made by the British Trust for Ornithology and the Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

It is considered likely that the surrounding countryside provides suitable habitat for Barn Owls, although the nearby A3072 to Bude, 1km to the north, may reduce the suitability in the immediate location of Springleaze Stables.

The desk study identified the following records of Bats:

Table 2 – Records of bat species

Species	Location	Date	Distance	Recorder
Long-eared sp. (<i>Plecotus sp.</i>)	North Tamerton	2016	Within 10km	Bat Conservation Trust
Pipistrelle sp. (<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>)	Near Whitstone	2015	Within 5km	Natural England
Lesser Horseshoe (<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>)	Tinney Waters	2009	Within 10km	Natural England

The Desk Study has identified three species of bats recorded within 10km of the site. It is considered likely that the surrounding countryside provides suitable habitat for bats.

4.2 Site Survey

Springleaze Stables comprise two buildings (a row of stables and a loose box) adjoined by a section of corrugated metal roofing.

Both buildings are of single-skin block and concrete construction with corrugated metal roofs. The roofs have clear plastic light panels within. The roofs have a simple timber frame. The buildings were both mainly clear of stored items and were easily inspected.

One Swallow's nest was identified in the stable block.

No evidence of bats was identified and it is considered these species are not present due to:

- Lack of suitable roosting features
- Lack of natural materials
- Light and draughty conditions
- Human disturbance
- Unsuitable roosting conditions (temperature, humidity).

5 Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1 Nesting birds

It is concluded that whilst the surrounding countryside provides some suitable habitat for this species, Barn Owls are likely to be absent from Springleaze Stables.

One Swallow's nest was identified. The following is recommended:

- *Works to convert the buildings will not commence whilst Swallows are nesting.*
- *The conversion design shall include deeply overhanging eaves to provide on-going habitat for this species.*
- *Additionally, two Swallow cups shall be erected to the conversion.*

5.2 Bats

No evidence of bat presence was identified, and it is considered unlikely suitable roosting features are present.

The conversion of the buildings provide an opportunity to create habitat for crevice-dwelling bats such as Pipistrelles, Whiskered/Brandt's and Natterer's, and therefore the following is recommended:

- At least two gaps shall be provided to each elevation. These shall measure 15-20mm width x 70mm length between soffits/fascias and walls
- keep external lighting to a minimum, using timed sensors wherever possible.

6 References

Barn Owl Trust (2010). *Survey techniques. Leaflet no. 8.* The Barn Owl Trust, Ashburton, Devon.

Collins, J. (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines* 3rd Edition.

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

Mitchell-Jones, A J (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines.* English Nature, Peterborough.

This report has been produced in good faith, with all reasonable skill, care and diligence based on the information provided and accessible at the time of its preparation and within the scope of the work agreed with the client.

We disclaim any responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the scope of the above.

This report is provided for the sole use of the named client and is confidential to them and their professional advisors.