

# Bat and Bird Scoping Survey of Sladacre Barn, Blagdon, Somerset

Client   Sworders  
Reference   B1135.001  
Issue   Two  
Date   14 September 2021

**Crossman Associates**

Ecological Consultants  
Fire Engine House  
Oakhill, Bath BA3 5BJ  
01761 233414  
info@crossmanassociates.co.uk

[www.crossmanassociates.com](http://www.crossmanassociates.com)

# Non-technical Summary

## Background

In August 2021, Crossman Associates was commissioned by Sworders to undertake a bat and bird survey of a Sladacre barn, a small period stone barn located in Blagdon, Somerset. The work follows on from an initial survey undertaken in 2016.

Proposals involve the conversion of the property into residential accommodation.

## Methodology

The scoping survey was undertaken by Fairbrass Knowles, a fully licensed bat worker and experienced ecologist. The building was inspected both externally and internally for any evidence of bat / bird presence, such as droppings, food remains, staining or actual bats / birds. An emergence survey was undertaken in 2016 and 2021.

## Results

The Property consists of a small, detached stone built traditional barn located close to the southern carriageway of the main Bath Road, Blagdon. The property possesses a limited range of abiotic bat roosting opportunities including hidden voids beneath roof tiles and cracks and holes within the supporting stone work walls and is considered to provide **Low Suitability for roosting bats. The emergence surveys revealed that bats are not currently roosting on site.**

Active swallow nests were noted within the internal roof timbers

## Recommendations

It is recommended that the following be undertaken as part of the development;

- A precautionary approach to development in relation to bats and birds.
- Ecological enhancements to include bat and bird boxes (optional).

# Contents

---

<b>NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. BACKGROUND</b>	<b>3</b>
SITE DESCRIPTION	3
LEGISLATION	4
<b>2. METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>5</b>
DESKTOP STUDY	5
<b>3. RESULTS</b>	<b>8</b>
DESKTOP STUDY	8
FIELD SURVEY	8
EVALUATION	16
<b>4. RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>18</b>
SPECIES RECOMMENDATIONS	18
ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENTS	19
<b>5. LIMITATIONS</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>6. REFERENCES</b>	<b>22</b>

# 1. Background

---

- 1.1. Crossman Associates was commissioned by Sworders to undertake a bat and bird scoping survey of Sladacre Barn, Blagdon, Somerset.
- 1.2. Proposals involve the conversion of the barn into residential accommodation.
- 1.3. The objectives of the survey were to:
  - Make an assessment of the likely presence or absence of bats and birds
  - Identify any legislative or planning policy constraints relevant to the site
  - Determine the need for further surveys, compensation or mitigation

## Site Description

- 1.4. Sladacre Barn is a small, detached and simply constructed stone-built barn with a pitched roof. The barn is located within the north-east corner of a grazed agricultural field and sits adjacent to the southern carriageway of the main Bristol road (A368) in the small rural village of Blagdon, Somerset. Site Ordnance Survey grid reference ST 5024 5876 (refer to Figure 1, Appendix I).
- 1.5. The village of Blagdon comprises two distinct sections, and Sladacre Barn is located roughly midway between the two sections within an area of low intensity farmland that forms a band through the middle of the village. Field units are divided by networks of both managed and unmanaged hedgerows. Hedgerows run close past the barns northern and western elevations

- 1.6. The wider landscape beyond the village limits is largely rural and is dominated by extensive areas of low intensity agricultural field units; divided by networks of both managed and unmanaged hedgerows. Small copses and areas of scrub are common within this landscape. There are no significant areas of woodland or water courses in close proximity of the barn.

## Legislation

- 1.7. In the UK all species of bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, 2010. Under this legislation it is a strict liability offence to injure or destroy a bat or to disturb damage or destroy the resting place of a bat. Under this legislation the UK is obliged to fully take into account bats within the planning process and the level of bat activity on-site must be fully assessed prior to the assessment the planning application
- 1.8. In Britain all wild birds are granted legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act ((1981) (as amended)). This legislation protects the birds, their eggs and nests whilst being built or in use.

## 2. Methodology

---

### Desktop Study

#### *Data search*

- 2.1. The MAGIC website was accessed to gain information on any statutory site designations within 4 km of the site that are designated for bats.

#### *National Planning Policy*

- 2.2. National Planning Policy has been reviewed for policies that relate to nature conservation relevant to the site.

### Field Survey

#### *Bat scoping survey*

- 2.3. The building was methodically inspected internally and externally for any evidence of roosting bats, including actual bats, droppings, urine staining and evidence of feeding activity such as discarded insect wings and cases.
- 2.4. The building was also assessed for its suitability to support roosting bats by considering several factors including whether bats can access internal and external voids within the building and whether these voids provide adequate protection and shelter for roosting bats. If the building is not confirmed as a roost, it is assessed from High to Negligible Suitability as follows;

- **High Suitability** – many roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be old, large and rural

- **Moderate Suitability** – some roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be old, rural with some recent maintenance
- **Low Suitability** – few roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be modern, urban and well maintained
- **Negligible Suitability** – insignificant roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be small, modern, urban and very well maintained.

*Evening emergence / activity surveys*

- 2.5. An evening emergence survey was conducted in 2016 and 2021 by suitably qualified personnel. Two surveyors attended the survey and were positioned so that all aspects of the building suitable for roosting bats could be observed. The Survey was undertaken during suitable weather conditions. The emergence survey commenced at sunset and continued for two hours. All general bat activity on site was also noted. The survey was completed by Alex Crossman and Fairbrass Knowles, both experienced bat surveyors
- 2.6. SSF 2, Echo meter touch and Peersonic bat detectors were used together with visual observations on flight patterns and feeding behaviour to aid identification to species level. Recordings of bat calls were made and later analysed using dedicated computer software BatScan.
- 2.7. The survey effort was also augmented with FLIR camera technology.

*Birds*

- 2.8. The buildings were also inspected for the presence of birds including house sparrow *Passer domesticus* and barn swallows *Hirundo rustica*. The building was checked for field signs including nesting material, accumulations of droppings and/or pellets.



## 3. Results

---

### Desktop Study

#### *Data Search*

3.1. The MAGIC website informed that the following statutory site designated for bats lie within a 4 km radius of the site.

- Compton Martin Ocre Mines Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) comprises site comprises a network of underground tunnels on the eastern fringe of Compton Wood. The mines are used as a hibernation site for the internationally rare greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolopus ferrumequinum*. The site lies approximately 3.8 km to the south-east of the site.
- The Cheddar complex; SSSI and SAC. The Cheddar complex supports a wide range of semi natural habitats which includes unimproved grassland, calcareous dry dwarf shrub heath, semi-natural broadleaved woodland and dense and scattered scrub. Bats are well represented and include; greater horseshoe bat, natterer's bat *Myotis natteri*, whiskered bat *Myotis mystacinus*, daubentons bat *myotis daubentoni* and brown long-eared bat *Plectotus auritus*. The site lies approximately 1.2 km south of the site.
- The site also falls within North Somerset and Mendip Bats; Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which lies approximately 3.8 km to the south of the site

#### *Planning Policy*

3.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) contains sections of relevance to nature conservation that include:

- 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; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation;
  - b) and 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 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.

## Field Survey

### *Bat scoping survey*

- 3.3. Survey work was undertaken by Fairbrass Knowles, an experienced ecologist and fully licensed bat worker, and took place on 7 September 2016. The building was fully accessible.
- 3.4. The external and internal conditions of the building are described in the table below and photographic reference can be found within Appendix II.
- 3.5. A table within Appendix III sets out the criteria for the way a building is assessed for its potential to support roosting bats.

Table 1: building description

Building	Feature	Feature Description	Bat suitability
<b>Sladacre Barn</b>	Overview	<p>A small rectangular detached period stone barn with a pitched roof of double Roman clay tiles. Overall, the barn is considered to be in a solid state.</p> <p>The barn is aligned in an east – west orientation and measures approximately 10 m x 6 m, eaves 3.1 m and apex 6 m.</p>	Low Suitability ☒
	Exterior	<p>Supporting walls are of solid 450 mm natural stone, which generally lacks any significant cracks or holes; the exception being on the eastern gable end where a large crack.</p> <p>Two large permanent openings are present on the southern elevation and are the only openings present on the building. A former doorway that has been bricked up is present on the eastern end.</p>	
	Interior	<p>The interior consists of one large bay open to the apex. The barn originally had a further floor but this has since collapsed and has been removed; a number of old and original floor joists remain, along with the remaining socket holes that would have housed the remaining but now absent floor joists; these features</p>	

		<p>have created numerous holes and crack and along with the presence of further holes and cracks created by missing stonework / mortar and provide various roosting opportunities for bats.</p> <p>The roof is held up by a simple timber cut and pitch roof design which appears to be comparatively new. Timbers are exposed and are of engineered timber and no complex carpentry is present. Type 1 f bitumastic felt is present as the tile under cloaking and is in good condition with no evidence of any tears or holes.</p>	
	Roof	<p>The roof is a simple double pitch design clad with double Roman clay tiles. The majority of the tiles are present and well-seated in place; a few have slipped and become misaligned. Simple clay ridge tiles form the ridges, with the addition of three specific ridge vents. Significant gaps are present along both eaves elevations where the base of the first row of tiles meets the wall plate/facia. These gaps lead into cavities formed by the topside of the sarking felt, roof battens and the underneath of the roof tile and are normal for this type of roof tile.</p> <p>Both roof verges have been recently re pointed and remain in good order. Facias / bargeboards run along both eaves elevations and are in a very poor state; particularly the northern section which has almost completely rotted away leaving the protruding rafter legs on display.</p>	

Sladacre Barn,  
Blagdon



*Bat emergence survey*

- 3.6. The property has been assessed to offer Low Suitability for roosting bats. Therefore, in line with survey guidance from The Bat Conservation Trust (2016), one evening emergence / activity survey was undertaken on 25 August 2016 and 17 June 2021
- 3.7. The table below details the results of the survey.

Table 2; Bat emergence table.

Survey Date	19 September 2016	17 June 2021
Survey Conditions	Cloud 0% Dry Wind level 4 Start temp 16°C End temp 17°C Sunset time 19:10	Cloud 0% Dry Wind level 4 Start temp 21°C End temp 21°C Sunset time 21:00
Emergence survey	No bat emergence.	No bat emergence
General bat activity. Non emergence.	During the survey two common pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> passes were recorded adjacent to the hedgerow that runs past the buildings northern elevation along the Bath Road (A368).	Low levels of activity 21.25 – common pipistrelle pass to east of building. 21.42 - common pipistrelle pass to east of building. 21.45 – Noctule pass overhead

### Birds

- 3.8. During the daytime survey eight barn swallow *Hirundo rustica* nests were found within the building, attached to internal roof timbers. At least two nests dated from this season; but due to the time of year the survey was conducted (September 2016), no nests were occupied and no adult birds were observed.

## Evaluation

### Bats

- 3.9. During the scoping survey no droppings, staining, feeding remains or actual bats were observed; however, the interior of the building is readily accessible to bats and possess numerous abiotic features in the form of complex cavities between roof tiles / ridges, in and around decayed roof timbers and within holes and cavities that are present in the exterior / interior stonework. These features provide possible hidden roosting opportunities and would make the identification of roosting bats and evidence of presence difficult to detect and makes it impossible to fully rule out the presence of bats within the building on the basis of this survey alone.
- 3.10. The site is well connected into adjacent habitats which include open areas of countryside situated to the north and south and are considered favourable in providing bats with foraging habitats. Overall the property is considered to possess **Low Bat Roosting Suitability**, therefore, in line with survey guidance published by the Bat Conservation Trust (2016) one emergence survey was carried out.
- 3.11. During the bat emergence surveys no bats were recorded either exiting or entering the building, so bats are not considered to be roosting within the building.



## 4. Recommendations

---

- 4.1. The recommendations in the paragraphs below are provided to help ensure that wildlife and important ecological features are protected during the course of works. Recommendations also set out mitigation measures to minimise harm where this cannot be avoided and provide compensation measures to allow the proposals to meet current legislative and planning policy objectives.
- 4.2. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) states that a public authority must 'in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity; Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat'.
- 4.3. Under the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged.
- 4.4. Paragraph 174b) of the NPPF (2018) states 'Plans should ...identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity' and Paragraph 175d) states that '...opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity'.

### Species recommendations

- 4.5. Due to the lack of evidence of roosting bats within any aspect of the building, it is not considered necessary or beneficial to undertake any further survey work.
- 4.6. Due to the transitory nature of bats and the rural position of the building, there is a small possibility that bats could be encountered during demolition works; therefore, all works must proceed under a cautionary approach. Tiles and roof panels will be removed in a vertical rather than horizontal sliding motion. Soffits

and masonry will be dismantled using a 'soft' approach taking care with cavity walls where present. All site workers will be vigilant at all times and in the very unlikely event that a bat is found then works must stop immediately and advice should be sought from Crossman Associates or Natural England (telephone number 0300 0603900).

### *Birds*

- 4.7. The building has been used by nesting swallows during the summer months, most likely between the months of May – September. Prior to any works commencing a thorough inspection should be undertaken. If birds are nesting, then any works that may directly affect the nest would have to cease until all dependent young have left the nest. Prior to the onset of spring, exclusion measures could be installed to prevent birds from starting to nest prior to the commencement of works.
- 4.8. Barn swallows are currently undergoing a decline in numbers and ideally barn swallows should be allowed continued access to roosting and nesting opportunities in alternative buildings; open fronted car ports, garages, or large porches are known to be used by this species and dropping boards can be fitted beneath areas where the birds are known to nest to prevent fouling.

### Ecological enhancements

- 4.9. Under the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged.
- 4.10. There is an opportunity during the development works to enhance the ecological value of the site relatively inexpensively for bats.

### *Bats*

- 4.11. It is recommended that 1 number Habibat bat box (type 001) is incorporated within the exterior masonry of the property. This model is designed for a variety of bat species and has good thermal properties making it suitable as both a maternity roost and hibernation roost. A variety of facings can be fitted to suit any existing brick, wood, stonework or rendered finish, making the box unobtrusive and aesthetically pleasing.
  
- 4.12. Apart from the front entrance of the 001, the box is fully sealed preventing bats from gaining entry to any interior part of the house. The boxes should be sited approximately 3 m – 4 m high on exterior gable ends / walls. The box should ideally be sited in such a location that bats are able to access into suitable habitat and away from exterior lighting. The boxes are self-cleaning and require no further maintenance.

## 5. Limitations

---

- 5.1. This report records wildlife found during the survey and anecdotal evidence of sightings. It does not record any plants or animals that may appear at other times of the year and were therefore not evident at the time of visit.
- 5.2. This report represents a preliminary assessment only. Recommendations and conclusions are subject to change should further findings significantly differ from those collected from the survey efforts to date.
- 5.3. The advice contained in this report relate primarily to factual survey results and general guidance only. On all legal matters you are advised to take legal advice.

## 6. References

---

**Bat Conservation Trust (BCT)** *Bats and Lighting in the UK* BCT

**HMSO (1981)** *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and subsequent amendments)*. HMSO

**HMSO (1995)** *Biodiversity*. The UK Steering Group Report

**Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)** *Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Reptiles and Amphibians* (2004) JNCC

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

**Mitchell-Jones, A.J , & McLeish A.P. (2012)** *The Bat Worker's Manual* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition)

**Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)**

**Website** at [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk)

**Stace, C. (1997)** *New Flora of the British Isles 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Cambridge University Press

**TSO (2012)** *National Planning Policy Framework*. TSO

**TSO (2006)** *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act* TSO

Appendix I – Site Figures



**crossman**  
ASSOCIATES



01761 233414  
info@crossmanassociates.co.uk  
www.crossmanassociates.co.uk



Site location



---

Client Brimble Lea & Partners  
Title Location map  
Site Sladacre Barm, Blagdon  
Figure 1  
Date 22 September 2016  
Scale Indicitive

## Appendix II – Site Photographs



## Photographs 1- 3



Photograph 1:

Southerly elevation



Photograph 2:

Northerly elevation



Photograph 3:

Easterly elevation

## Photographs 4 - 6



Photograph 4:

Western elevation



Photograph 5:

Exterior crack on eastern elevation gable



Photograph 6:

Internal roof void

## Photographs 7 - 9



Photograph 7:

Hole present in internal stone wall



Photograph 8:

Cavities surrounding internal floor joist socket



Photograph 9:

Protruding rafter legs (northern elevation)



## Appendix III – Information Sheets

---

Bat roosting potential	Criteria	Survey requirements to prove likely absence <sup>1</sup>
Negligible	No features or locations presenting roosting opportunities apparent. Building, structure or tree considered unlikely to be used by roosting bats, although occasional or transient use can rarely be entirely ruled out	No further survey work required
Low	Few features or locations within building, structure or tree with the potential to support roosting bats, although quality of these features limited by size, aspect or internal micro-climate. Although not directly assessed by these criteria, the chances of significant roost types (maternity or hibernation) is not considered likely	One activity survey
Medium	Some features/locations within building, structure or tree with the potential to be used by roosting bats. Although not directly assessed by these criteria, the chances of significant roost types (maternity or hibernation) is considered possible	Two activity surveys
High	Several features/locations within building, structure or tree with the potential to support roosting bats. Combination of size, aspect and internal micro-climate within these locations make them very suitable for roosting bats. Although not directly assessed by these criteria, the chance of significant roost types (maternity or hibernation) is considered possible	Three activity surveys

---

<sup>1</sup> Survey requirements are taken from the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guide (2012), which is the recognised industry standard guidance used by local planning authorities and other statutory consultees.